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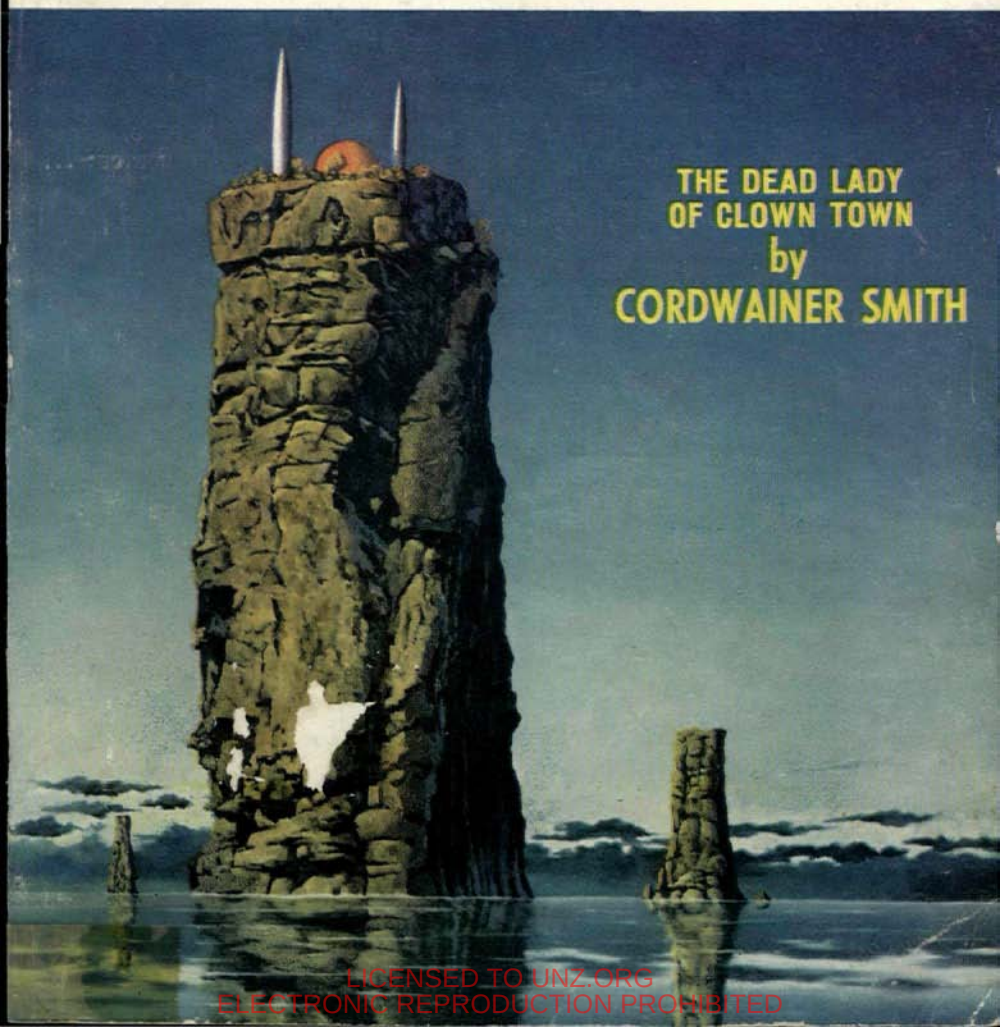
Galaxy

THE WATCHERS IN THE GLADE
by
RICHARD WILSON

HE DELEGATE FROM GUAPANGA
by WYMAN GUIN



THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN
by
CORDWAINER SMITH

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Galaxy
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POLITICS -- 21st CENTURY STYLE

Entering our quadrennial business of electing an American president with the usual mixture of anticipation and dread, our thoughts are beginning to turn to politics. So, as you will observe beginning of page 165 of this issue, are the thoughts of science-fiction writers. And of course, the kind of politics Wyman Guin is thinking about are rather remote in space and time from our own . . . they are, in fact, that long view of events that science fiction gives us better than any other form of reading ever committed to paper and print; because Guin's politicians are not merely other than Democrats and Republicans. They are other than human!

But all too human in their approach to the serious problem of governing their world.

A personal note might be in order here. As a natural consequence of having registered in one of America's two political parties in an area where the other party had long held a monopoly of election victories, I've spent most of my Novembers for the past few years either running for an office or helping some other candidates run for an office.

As a result of this rather expensively obtained education, I would like to suggest a fact of political life that doesn't seem to be widely known. That is: In an election, hardly anyone votes for a candidate; what they actually go to the polls to do is to vote against his opponent. There are many reasons for this, but what seems to me to be the significant one is that American political parties don't really embody differing political philosophies; it is a matter of personality that brings the vote out. And of course, we are always quicker to express dislike than we are fondness . . . .

But if the parties are totally different . . . well, read Wyman Guin's story and see.

—FREDERIK POHL

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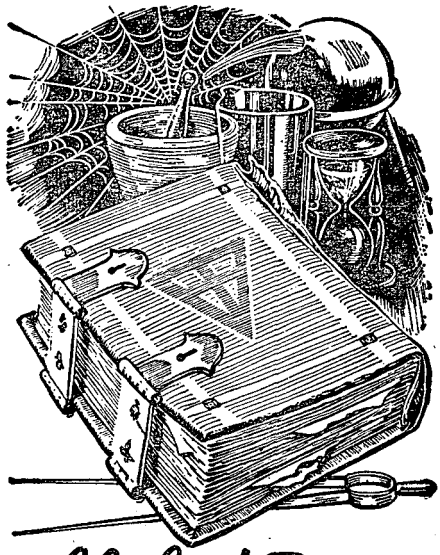

Secrets entrusted to a few

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THERE are some things that cannot be generally told—*things you ought to know.* Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind,* and *the mastery of life's problems.* Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

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THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN

BY CORDWAINER SMITH

Illusarated by MORROW

She was born and bred to heal any ill — in an age which had forgot the habit of sickness!

I

You already know the end — the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy. But you do not know the beginning, how the first Lord Jestocost got his name, because of the terror and inspiration which his mother, the Lady Goroke, obtained from the famous real-life drama of the dog-girl D'joan. It is even less likely that you know the other story — the one behind D'joan. This story is sometimes mentioned as the matter of the "name-

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less witch," which is absurd, because she really had a name. The name was "Elaine," an ancient and forbidden one.

Elaine was a mistake. Her birth, her life, her career were all mistakes. The ruby was wrong. How could that have happened?

Go back to An-fang, the Peace Square at An-fang, the Beginning Place at An-fang, where all things start. Bright it was. Red square, dead square, clear square, under a yellow sun.

This was Earth Original, Manhome itself, where Earthport thrusts its way up through hurricane clouds that are higher than the mountains.

An-fang was near a city, the only living city with a pre-atomic name. The lovely meaningless name was Meeya Meefla, where the lines of ancient roadways, untouched by a wheel for thousands of years, forever paralleled the warm, bright, clear beaches of the Old South. East.

The headquarters of the People Programmer was at An-fang, and there the mistake happened:

A ruby trembled. Two tourmaline nets failed to rectify the laser beam. A diamond noted the error. Both the error and the correction went into the general computer.

The error assigned, on the general account of births for Fomalhaut III, the profession of "lay therapist, female, intuitive capacity for correction of human physiology with local resources." On some of the early ships they used to call these people *witch-women,* because they worked unaccountable cures. For pioneer parties, these lay therapists were invaluable; in settled post-Riesmannian societies, they became an awful nuisance. Sickness disappeared with good conditions, accidents dwindled down to nothing, medical work became institutional.

Who wants a witch, even a good witch, when a thousand-bed hospital is waiting with its staff eager for clinical experience . . . and only seven out of its thousand beds filled with real people? (The remaining beds were filled with lifelike robots on which the staff could practice, lest they lose their morale. They could, of course, have worked on underpeople — animals in the shape of human beings, who did the heavy and the weary work which remained as the *caput mortuum* of a really perfected economy — but it was against the law for animals, even when they were underpeople, to go to a human hospital. When underpeople got sick, the Instrumentality took care of them — in slaughterhouses. It was easier to breed new underpeople for the job than

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it was to repair sick ones. Furthermore, the tender, loving care of a hospital might give them ideas. Such as the idea that they were people. This would have been bad, from the prevailing point of view. Therefore the human hospitals remained almost empty while an underperson who sneezed four times or who vomited once was taken away, never to be ill again. The empty beds kept on with the robot patients, who went through endless repetitions of the human patterns of injury or disease.) This left no work for witches, bred and trained.

Yet the ruby had trembled; the program had indeed made a mistake; the birth-number for a "lay therapist, general, female, immediate use" had been ordered for Fomalhaut III.

Much later, when the story was all done down to its last historic detail, there was an investigation into the origins of Elaine. When the laser had trembled, both the original order and the correction were fed simultaneously into the machine. The machine recognized the contradiction and promptly referred both papers to the human supervisor, an actual man who had been working on the job for seven years.

He was studying music, and he was bored. He was so close to the end of his term that he was already counting the days to his own release. Meanwhile he was rearranging two popular songs. One was *The Big Bamboo,* a primitive piece which tried to evoke the original magic of man. The other was about a girl, *Elaine, Elaine* whom the song asked to refrain from giving pain to her loving swain. Neither of the songs was important; but between them they influenced history, first a little bit and then very much.

The musician had plenty of time to practice. He had not had to meet a real emergency in all his seven years. From time to time the machine made reports to him, but the musician just told the machine to correct its own errors, and it infallibly did so.

On the day that the accident of Elaine happened, he was trying to perfect his finger work on the guitar, a very old instrument believed to date from the pre-space period. He was playing *The Big Bamboo* for the hundredth time.

The machine announced its mistake with an initial musical chime. The supervisor had long since forgotten all the instructions which he had so worrisomely memorized seven long years ago. The alert did not

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really and truly matter, because the machine invariably corrected its own mistakes whether the supervisor was on duty or not.

The machine, not having its chime answered, moved into a second-stage alarm. From a loudspeaker set in the wall of the room, it shrieked in a high, clear human voice, the voice of some employee who had died thousands of years earlier:

"Alert, alert! Emergency. Correction needed. Correction needed!"

The answer was one which the machine had never heard before, old though it was. The musician's fingers ran madly, gladly over the guitar strings and he sang clearly, wildly back to the machine a message strange beyond any machine's belief:

Beat, beat the Big Bamboo!
Beat, beat, beat the Big Bamboo for me . . . !

Hastily the machine set its memory banks and computers to work, looking for the code reference to "bamboo," trying to make that word fit the present context. There was no reference at all. The machine pestered the man some more.

"Instructions unclear. Instructions unclear. Please correct."

"Shut up," said the man.

"Cannot comply," stated the machine. "Please state and repeat, please state and repeat, please state and repeat."

"Do shut up," said the man, but he knew the machine would not obey this. Without thinking, he turned to his other tune and sang the first two lines twice over:

Elaine, Elaine,
go cure the pain!
Elaine, Elaine,
go cure the pain!

Repetition had been inserted as a safeguard into the machine, on the assumption that no real man would repeat an error. The name "Elaine" was not correct number code, but the fourfold emphasis seemed to confirm the need for a "lay therapist, female." The machine itself noted that a genuine man had corrected the situation card presented as a matter of emergency.

"Accepted," said the machine.

This word, too late, jolted the supervisor away from his music.

"Accepted what?" he asked.

There was no answering voice. There was no sound at all except for the whisper of slightly-moistened warm air through the ventilators.

The supervisor looked out the window. He could see a little of the blood-black red color of the Peace Square of An-fang; beyond lay the ocean, endlessly beautiful and endlessly tedious.

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The supervisor sighed hopefully. He was young. "Guess it doesn't matter," he thought, picking up his guitar.

(Thirty-seven years later, he found out that it did matter. The Lady Goroke herself, one of the chiefs of the Instrumentality, sent a subchief of the Instrumentality to find out who had caused D'joan. When the man found that the witch Elaine, was the source of the trouble she sent him on to find out how Elaine had gotten into a well-ordered universe. The supervisor was found. He was still a musician. He remembered nothing of the story. He was hypnotized. He still remembered nothing. The sub-chief invoked an emergency and Police Drug Four ("clear memory") was administered to the musician. He immediately remembered the whole silly scene, but insisted that it did not matter. The case was referred to Lady Goroke, who instructed the authorities that the musician be told the whole horrible, beautiful story of D'joan at Fomalhaut — the very story which you are now being told — and he wept. He was not punished otherwise, but the Lady Goroke commanded that those memories be left in his mind for so long as he might live.)

The man picked up his guitar, but the machine went on about its work.

It selected a fertilized human embryo, tagged it with the freakish name "Elaine," irradiated the genetic code with strong aptitudes for witchcraft and then marked the person's card for training in medicine, transportation by sailship to Fomalhaut III and release for service on the planet.

Elaine was born without being needed, without being wanted, without having a skill which could help or hurt any existing human being. She went into life doomed and useless.

It is not remarkable that she was misbegotten. Errors do happen. Remarkable was the fact that she managed to survive without being altered, corrected or killed by the safety devices which mankind has installed in society for its own protection.

Unwanted, unused, she wandered through the tedious months and useless years of her own existence. She was well fed, richly clothed, variously housed. She had machines and robots to serve her, underpeople to obey her, people to protect her against one another or against herself, should the need arise. But she could never find work; without work, she had no time for love; without work or love, she had no hope at all.

If she had only stumbled into the right experts or the right au-

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thorities, they would have altered or re-trained her. This would have made her into an acceptable woman; but she did not find the police, nor did they find her. She was helpless to correct her own programming, utterly helpless. It had been imposed on her at An-fang, way back at An-fang, where all things begin.

The ruby had trembled, the tourmaline failed, the diamond passed unsupported. Thus, a woman was born doomed.

II

Much later, when people made songs about the strange case of the dog-girl D'joan, the minstrels and singers had tried to imagine what Elaine felt like, and they had made up *The Song of Elaine* for her. It is not authentic, but it shows how Elaine looked at her own life before the strange case of D'joan began to flow from Elaine's own actions:

Other women hate me.
Men never touch me.
I am too much me.
I'll be a witch!

Mama never towelled me.
Daddy never growled me
Little kiddies grate me
I'll be a bitch!

People never named me
Dogs never shamed me
Oh, I am a such me!
I'll be a witch.

I'll make them shun me.
They'll never run me.
Could they even stun me?
I'll be a witch.

Let them all attack me.
They can only rack me.
Me — I can hack me.
I'll be a witch.

Other women hate me.
Men never touch me.
I am too much me.
I'll be a witch.

The song overstates the case. Women did not hate Elaine; they did not look at her. Men did not shun Elaine; they did not notice her either. There were no places on Fomalhaut III where she could have met human children, for the nurseries were far underground because of chancy radiation and fierce weather. The song pretends that Elaine began with the thought that she was not human, but underpeople, and had herself been born a dog. This did not happen at the beginning of the case, but only at the very end, when the story of D'joan was already being carried between the stars and developing with all the new twists of folklore and legend. She never went mad.

("Madness" is a rare condition, consisting of a human mind which does not engage its environment correctly. Elaine approached it before she met D'joan. Elaine was not the only case, but she was a rare and genuine one. Her life, thrust back from all attempts at growth, had turned back on itself and her mind had spiraled inward to the only safety she could really know, psychosis.

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Madness is always better than X, and X to each patient is individual, personal, secret and overwhelmingly important. Elaine had gone normally mad; her imprinted and destined career was the wrong one. "Lay therapists, female" were coded to work decisively, autonomously, on their own authority and with great rapidity. These working conditions were needed on new planets. They were not coded to consult other people; most places, there would be no one to consult. Elaine did what was set for her at An-fang, all the way down to the individual chemical conditions of her spinal fluid. She was herself the wrong and she never knew it. Madness was much kinder than the realization that she was not herself, should not have lived, and amounted at the most to a mistake committed between a trembling ruby and a young, careless man with a guitar.)

She found D'joan and the worlds reeled.

Their meeting occurred at a place nicknamed "the edge of the world," where the undercity met daylight. This was itself unusual; but Fomalhaut III was an unusual and uncomfortable planet, where wild weather and men's caprice drove architects to furious design and grotesque execution.

Elaine walked through the city, secretly mad, looking for sick people whom she could help. She had been stamped, imprinted, designed, born, bred and trained for this task. There was no task.

She was an intelligent woman. Bright brains serve madness as well as they serve sanity — namely, very well indeed. It never occurred to her to give up her mission.

The people of Fomalhaut III, like the people of Manhome Earth itself, are almost uniformly handsome; it is only in the far-out, half-unreachable worlds that the human stock, strained by the sheer effort to survive, becomes ugly, weary or varied. She did not look much different from the other intelligent, handsome people who flocked the streets. Her hair was black, and she was tall. Her arms and legs were long, the trunk of her body short. She wore her hair brushed straight back from a high, narrow, square forehead. Her eyes were an odd deep blue. Her mouth might have been pretty, but it never smiled, so that no one could really tell whether it was beautiful or not. She stood erect and proud: but so did everyone else. Her mouth was strange in its very lack of communicativeness and her eyes swept back and forth, back and forth like ancient radar, looking

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for the sick, the needy, and stricken, whom she had a passion to serve.

How could she be unhappy? She had never had time to be happy. It was easy for her to think that happiness was something which disappeared at the end of childhood. Now and then, here and there, perhaps when a fountain murmured in sunlight or when leaves exploded in the startling Fomalhautian spring, she wondered that other people — people as responsible as herself by the doom of age, grade, sex, training and career number — should be happy when she alone seemed to have no time for happiness. But she always dismissed the thought and walked the ramps and streets until her arches ached, looking for work which did not yet exist.

Human flesh, older than history, more dogged than culture, has its own wisdom. The bodies of people are marked with the archaic ruses of survival, so that on Fomalhaut III, Elaine herself preserved the skills of ancestors she never even thought about — those ancestors, who in the incredible and remote past, had mastered terrible Earth itself. Elaine was mad. But there was a part of her which suspected that she was mad.

Perhaps this wisdom seized her as she walked from Waterrocky Road toward the bright esplanades of the Shopping Bar. She saw a forgotten door. The robots could clean near it but, because of the old, odd, architectural shape, they could not sweep and polish right at the bottom line of the door. A thin hard line of old dust and caked polish lay like a sealant at the base of the doorline. It was obvious that no one had gone through for a long, long time.

The civilized rule was that prohibited areas were marked both telepathically and with symbols. The most dangerous of all had robot or underpeople guards. But everything which was not prohibited, was permitted. Thus Elaine had no right to open the door, but she had no obligation not to do so. She opened it —

By sheer caprice.

Or so she thought.

This was a far cry from the "I'll be a witch" motif attributed to her in the later ballad. She was not yet frantic, not yet desperate, she was not yet even noble.

That opening of a door changed her own world and changed life on thousands of planets for generations to come, but the opening was not itself strange. It was the tired caprice of a thoroughly frustrated and mildly unhappy woman. Nothing more. All the other descriptions of it have

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been improvements, embellishments, falsifications.

She did get a shock when she opened the door, but not for the reasons attributed backwards to her by balladists and historians.

She was shocked because the door opened on steps and the steps led down to landscape and sunlight — truly an unexpected sight on any world. She was looking from the New City to the Old City. The New City rose on its shell out over the old city, and when she looked "indoors" she saw the sunset in the city below. She gasped at the beauty and the unexpectedness of it.

There, the open door — *with another world beyond it.* Here, the old familiar street, clean, handsome, quiet, useless, where her own useless self had walked a thousand times.

There — something. Here, the world she knew. She did not know the words "fairyland" or "magic place," but if she had known them, she would have used them.

She glanced to the right, to the left.

The passerby noticed neither her nor the door. The sunset was just beginning to show in the upper city. In the lower city it was already blood-red with streamers of gold like enormous frozen flame. Elaine did not know that she sniffed the air; she did not know that she trembled on the edge of tears; she did not know that a tender smile, the first smile in years, relaxed her mouth and turned her tired tense face into a passing loveliness. She was too intent on looking around.

People walked about their business. Down the road, an underpeople type — female, possibly cat — detoured far around a true human who was walking at a slower pace. Far away, a police ornithopter flapped slowly around one of the towers; unless the robots used a telescope on her or unless they had one of the rare hawk-undermen who were sometimes used as police, they could not see her.

She stepped through the doorway and pulled the door itself back into the closed position.

She did not know it, but therewith unborn futures reeled out of existence, rebellion flamed into coming centuries, people and underpeople died in strange causes, mothers changed the names of unborn Lords and starships whispered back from places which men had not even imagined before. Space 3 which had always been there, waiting for men's notice, would come the sooner — because of her, because of the door, because of her next few steps, what she would say

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and the child she would meet. (The ballad-writers told the whole story later on, but they told it backwards, from their own knowledge of D'joan and what Elaine had done to set the worlds afire. The simple truth is the fact that a lonely woman went through a mysterious door. That is all. Everything else happened later.)

At the top of the steps she stood, door closed behind her, the sunset gold of the unknown city streaming out in front of her. She could see where the great shell of the New City of Kalma arched out toward the sky; she could see that the buildings here were older, less harmonious than the ones she had left. She did not know the concept "picturesque," or she would have called it that. She knew no concept to describe the scene which lay peacefully at her feet.

There was not a person in sight.

Far in the distance, a fire- detector throbbed back and forth on top of an old tower. Outside of that there was nothing but the yellow-gold city beneath her, and a bird — was it a bird, or a large storm-swept leaf? — in the middle distance.

Filled with fear, hope, expectation and the surmisal of strange appetites, she walked downward. With quiet, unknown purpose.

III

At the foot of the stairs, nine flights of them there had been, a child waited — a girl, about five. The child had a bright blue smock, wavy red-brown hair, and the daintiest hands which Elaine had ever seen.

Elaine's heart went out to her. The child looked up at her and shrank away. Elaine knew the meaning of those h a n d s o m e brown eyes, of that muscular supplication of trust, that recoil from people. It was not a child at all — just some animal in the shape of a person, a dog perhaps, which would later be taught to speak, to work to perform useful services.

The little girl rose, standing as though she were about to run. Elaine had the feeling that the little dog-girl had not decided whether to run toward her or from her. She did not wish to get involved with an underperson — what woman would? — but neither did she wish to frighten the little thing. After all, it was small, very young.

The two confronted each other for a moment, the little thing uncertain, Elaine relaxed. Then the little animal-girl spoke.

"Ask her," she said, and it was a command.

Elaine was surprised. Since when did animals command?

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"Ask her!" repeated the little thing. She pointed at a window which had the words TRAVELERS' AID above it. Then the girl ran. A flash of blue from her dress, a twinkle of white from her running sandals, and she was gone.

Elaine stood quiet and puzzled in the forlorn and empty city.

The window spoke to her, "You might as well come on over. You will, you know."

It was the wise mature voice of an experienced woman — a voice with a bubble of laughter underneath its phonic edge, with a hint of sympathy and enthusiasm in its tone. The command was not merely a command. It was, even at its beginning, a happy private joke between two wise women.

Elaine was not surprised when a machine spoke to her. Recordings had been telling her things all her life. She was not sure of this situation, however.

"Is there somebody there?" she said.

"Yes and no," said the voice. "I'm 'Travelers' Aid' and I help everybody who comes through this way. You're lost or you wouldn't be here. Put your hand in my window."

"What I mean is," said Elaine, "are you a person or are you a machine?"

"Depends," said the voice. "I'm a machine, but I used to be a person, long, long ago. A lady, in fact, and one of the Instrumentality. But my time came and they said to me, 'Would you mind if we made a machine print of your whole personality? It would be very helpful for the information booths." So of course I said yes, and they made this copy, and I died, and they shot my body into space with all the usual honors, but here I was. It felt pretty odd inside this contraption, me looking at things and talking to people and giving good advice and staying busy, until they built the new city. So what do you say? Am I me or aren't I?"

"I don't know, ma'am." Elaine stood back.

The warm voice lost its humor and became commanding. "Give me your hand, then, so I can identify you and tell you what to do."

"I think," said Elaine, "that I'll just go back upstairs and go through the door into the upper city."

"And cheat me," said the voice in the window, "out of my first conversation with a real person in four years?" There was demand in the voice, but there was still the warmth and the humor; there was loneliness too. The loneliness decided Elaine. She stepped up to the window and

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put her hand flat on the ledge.

"You're Elaine," cried the window. "You're *Elaine!* The worlds wait for you. You're from An-fang, where all things begin, the Peace Square at An-fang, on old Earth itself!"

"Yes," said Elaine.

The voice bubbled over with enthusiasm. "He is waiting for you. Oh, he has waited for you a long, long time. And the little girl you met. *That was D'joan herself.* The story has begun. 'The world's great age begins a new.' And I can die when it is over. So sorry, my dear. I don't mean to confuse you. I am the lady Panc Ashash. You're Elaine. Your number originally ended 783 and you shoudn't even be on this planet. All the important people here end with the numbers 5 and 6. You're a lay therapist and you're in the wrong place, but your lover is already on his way, and you've never been in love yet, and it's all too exciting."

Elaine looked quickly around her. The old lower town was turning more red and less gold as the sunset progresssed. The steps behind her seemed terribly high as she looked back, the door at the top very small. Perhaps it had locked on her when she closed it. Maybe she wouldn't ever be able to leave the old lower city.

The window must have been watching her in some way, because the voice of the lady Panc Ashash became tender.

"Sit down my dear," said the voice from the window. "When I was me, I used to be much more polite. I haven't been me for a long, long time. I'm a machine, and still I feel like myself. Do sit down, and do forgive me."

Elaine looked around. There was the roadside marble bench behind her. She sat on it obediently. The happiness which had been in her at the top of the steps bubbled forth anew. If this wise old machine knew so much about her, perhaps it could tell her what to do. What did the voice mean by "wrong planet"? By "lover"? By "he is coming for you now," or was that what the voice had actually said?

"Take a breath, my dear," said the voice of the lady Panc Ashash. She might have been dead for hundreds or thousands of years, but she still spoke with the authority and kindness of a great lady.

Elaine breathed deep. She saw a huge red cloud, like a pregnant whale, getting ready to butt the rim of the upper city, far above her and far out over the sea. She wondered if clouds could possibly have feelings.

The voice was speaking again. What had it said?

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Apparently the question was repeated. "Did you know you were coming?" said the voice from the window.

"Of course not." Elaine shrugged. "There was just this door, and I didn't have anything special to do, so I opened it. And here was a whole new world inside a house. It looked strange and rather pretty, so I came down. Wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

"I don't know," said the voice candidly. "I'm really a machine. I haven't been me for a long, long time. Perhaps I would have, when I was alive. I don't know that, but I know about things. Maybe I can see the future, or perhaps the machine part of me computes such good probabilities that it just seems like it. I know who you are and what is going to happen to you. You had better brush your hair."

"Whatever for?" said Elaine.

"He is coming," said the happy old voice of the lady Panc Ashash.

"*Who* is coming?" said Elaine, almost irritably.

"Do you have a mirror? I wish you would look at your hair. It could be prettier, not that it isn't pretty right now. You want to look your best. Your lover; that's who is coming, of course."

"I haven't got a lover," said Elaine. "I haven't been authorized one, not till I've done some of my lifework, and I haven't even found my lifework yet. I'm not the kind of girl who would go ask a Subchief for the dreamies, not when I'm not entitled to the real thing. I may not be much of a person, but I have some self-respect." Elaine got so mad that she shifted her position on the bench and sat with her face turned away from the all-watching window.

The next words gave her gooseflesh down her arms, they were uttered with such real earnestness, such driving sincerity. *"Elaine, Elaine, do you really have no idea of who you are?"*

Elaine pivoted back on the bench so that she looked toward the window. Her face was caught redly but the rays of the setting sun. She could only gasp.

"I don't know what you mean . . ."

The inexorable voice went on. "Think, Elaine, think. Does the name 'D'joan' mean nothing to you?"

"I suppose it's an underperson, a dog. That's what the D is for, isn't it?"

"That was the little girl you met," said the lady Panc Ashash, as though the statement were something tremendous.

"Yes," said Elaine dutifully. She was a courteous woman, and never quarreled with strangers.

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"Wait a minute," said the lady Panc Ashash, "I'm going to get my body out. God knows when I wore it last, but it'll make you feel more at easy terms with me. Forgive the clothes. They're old stuff, but I think the body will work all right. This is the beginning of the story of D'joan, and I want that hair of yours brushed even if I have to brush it myself. Just wait right there, girl, wait right there. I'll just take a minute."

The clouds were turning from dark red to liver-black. What could Elaine do? She stayed on the bench. She kicked her shoe against the walk. She jumped a little when the old-fashioned street lights of the lower city went on with sharp geometrical suddenness; they did not have the subtle shading of the newer lights in the other city upstairs, where day phased into the bright clear night with no sudden shift in color.

The door beside the little window creaked open. Ancient plastic crumbled to the walk.

Elaine was astonished.

Elaine knew she must have been unconsciously expecting a monster, but this was a charming women of about her own height, wearing weird, old-fashioned clothes. The strange woman had glossy black hair, no evidence of recent or current illness, no signs of severe lesions in the past, no impairment evident of sight, gait, reach or eyesight. (There was no way she could check on smell or taste right off, but this was the medical check-up she had had built into her from birth on — the checklist which she had run through with every adult person she had ever met. She had been designed as a "lay therapist, female" and she was a good one, even when there was no one at all to treat.)

Truly, the body was a rich one. It must have cost the landing charges of forty or fifty planetfalls. The human shape was perfectly rendered. The mouth moved over genuine teeth; the words were formed by throat, palate, tongue, teeth and lips, and not just by a microphone mounted in the head. The body was really a museum piece. It was probably a copy of the lady Panc Ashash herself in time of life. When the face smiled, the effect was indescribably winning. The lady wore the costume of a byegone age — a stately frontal dress of heavy blue material, embroidered with a square pattern of gold at hem, waist and bodice. She had a matching cloak of dark, faded gold, embroidered in blue with the same pattern of squares. Her hair was upswept and set with jeweled combs. It

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seemed perfectly natural, but there was dust on one side of it.

The robot smiled, "I'm out of date. It's been a long time since I was me. But I thought, my dear, that you would find this old body easier to talk to than the window over there . . ."

Elaine nodded mutely.

"You know this is not me?" said the body, sharply.

Elaine shook her head. She didn't know; she felt that she didn't know anything at all.

The lady Panc Ashash looked at her earnestly. "This is not me. It's a robot body. You looked at it as though it were a real person. And I'm not me, either. It hurts sometimes. Did you know a machine could hurt? I can. But — I'm not *me*."

"Who are you?" said Elaine to the pretty old woman.

"Before I died, I was the lady Panc Ashash. Just as I told you. Now I am a machine, and a part of your destiny. We will help each other to change the destiny of worlds, perhaps even to bring mankind back to humanity."

Elaine stared at her in bewilderment. This was no common robot. It seemed like a real person and spoke with such warm authority. And this thing, whatever it was, this thing seemed to know so much about her. Nobody else had ever cared. The nurse-mothers at the Childhouse on earth had said, "Another witch-child, and pretty too, they're not much trouble," and had let her life go by.

At last Elaine could face the face which was not really a face. The charm, the humor, the expressiveness were still there.

"What — what," stammered Elaine, "do I do now?"

"Nothing," said the long-dead lady Panc Ashash, "except to meet your destiny."

"You mean my lover?"

"So impatient!" laughed the dead woman's record in a very human way. "Such a hurry. Lover first and destiny later. I was like that myself when I was a girl."

"But what do I do?" persisted Elaine.

The night was now complete above them. The street lights glared on the empty and unswept streets. A few doorways, not one of them less than a full street-crossing away, were illuminated with rectangles of light or shadow — light if they were far from the street lights, so that their own interior lights shone brightly, shadow if they were so close under the big lights that they cut off the glare from overhead.

"Go through this door," said the old nice woman.

But she pointed at the undistinguished white of an unin-

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terrupted wall. There was no door at all in that place.

"But there's no door there," said Elaine.

"If there were a door," said the lady Panc Ashash, "you wouldn't need me to tell you to go through it. And you do need me."

"Why?" said Elaine.

"Because I've waited for you hundreds of years, that's why."

"That's no answer!" snapped Elaine.

"It is so an answer," smiled the woman, and her lack of hostility was not robot-like at all. It was the kindliness and composure of a mature human being. She looked up into Elaine's eyes and spoke emphatically and softly. "I know because I do know. Not because I'm a dead person — that doesn't matter any more — but because I am now a very old machine. You will go into the Brown and Yellow Corridor and you will think of your lover, and you will do your work, and men will hunt you. But you will come out happily in the end. Do you understand this?"

"No," said Elaine, "no, I don't." But she reached out her hand to the sweet old woman. The lady took her hand. The touch was warm and very human.

"You don't have to understand it. Just do it. And I know you will. So since you are going, go."

Elaine tried to smile at her, but she was troubled, more consciously worried than ever before in her life. Something real was happening to her, to her own individual self, at a very long last. "How will I get through the door?"

"I'll open it," smiled the lady, releasing Elaine's hand, "and you'll know your lover when he sings you the poem."

"Which poem?" said Elaine, stalling for time and frightened by a door which did not even exist.

"It starts, 'I knew you and loved you, and won you, in Kalma . . .' You'll know it. Go on in. It'll be bothersome at first, but when you meet the Hunter, it will all seem different."

"Have you ever been in there, yourself?"

"Of course not," said the dear old lady. "I'm a machine. That whole place is thoughtproof. Nobody can see, hear, think or talk in or out of it. It's a shelter left over from the ancient wars, when the slightest sign of a thought would have brought destruction on the whole place. That's why the lord Englok built it, long before my time. But you can go in. And you will. Here's the door."

The old robot lady waited no longer. She gave Elaine a strange

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friendly crooked smile, half proud and half apologetic. She took Elaine with firm fingertips holding Elaine's left elbow. They walked a few steps down toward the wall.

"Here, now," said the lady Panc Ashash, and pushed.

Elaine flinched as she was thrust toward the wall. Before she knew it, she was through. Smells hit her like a roar of battle. The air was hot. The light was dim. It looked like a picture of the Pain Planet, hidden somewhere in space. Poets later tried to describe Elaine at the door with a verse which begin,

> There were brown ones and blue ones
> And white ones and whiter,
> In the hidden and forbidden
> Downtown of Clown Town.
> There were horrid ones and horrider
> In the brown and yellow corridor.

The truth was much simpler.

Trained witch, born witch that she was, she perceived the truth immediately. All these people, all she could see, at least, were sick. They needed help. They needed herself.

But the joke was on her, for she could not help a single one of them. Not one of them was a real person. They were just animals, things in the shape of man. Underpeople. Dirt.

And she was conditioned to the bone never to help *them*.

She did not know why the muscles of her legs made her walk forward, but they did.

There are many pictures of that scene.

The lady Panc Ashash, only a few moments in her past, seemed very remote. And the city of Kalma itself, the new city, ten stories above her, almost seemed as though it had never existed at all. This, this was real.

She stared at the underpeople.

And this time, for the first time in her life, they stared right back at her. She had never seen anything like this before.

They did not frighten her; they surprised her. The fright, Elaine felt, was to come later. Soon, perhaps, but not here, not now.

IV

Something which looked like a middle-aged woman walked right up to her and snapped at her.

"Are you death?"

Elaine stared. "Death? What do you mean? I'm Elaine."

"Be damned to that!" said the woman-thing. "Are you death?"

Elaine did not know the word "damned" but she was pretty sure that "death," even to these things, meant simply "termination of life."

"Of course not," said Elaine. "I'm just a person. A witch woman, ordinary people would call

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me. We don't have anything to do with you underpeople. Nothing at all." Elaine could see that the woman-thing had an enormous coiffure of soft brown sloppy hair, a sweat-reddened face and crooked teeth which showed when she grinned.

"They all say that. They never know that they're death. How do you think we die, if you people don't send contaminated robots in with diseases? We all die off when you do that, and then some more underpeople find this place again later on and make a shelter of it and live in it for a few generations until the death machines, things like you, come sweeping through the city and kill us off again. This is Clown Town, the underpeople place. Haven't you heard of it?"

Elaine tried to walk past the woman-thing, but she found her arm grabbed. This couldn't have happened before, not in the history of the world — an underperson seizing a real person!

"Let go!" she yelled.

The woman-thing let her arm go and faced toward the others. Her voice had changed. It was no longer shrill and excited, but low and puzzled instead. "I can't tell. Maybe it is a real person. Isn't that a joke? Lost, in here with us. Or maybe she *is* death. I can't tell. What do you think, Charley-is-my-darling?"

The man she spoke to stepped forward. Elaine thought, in another time, in some other place, that underperson might pass for an attractive human being. His face was illuminated by intelligence and alertness. He looked directly at Elaine as though he had never seen her before, which indeed he had not, but he continued looking with so sharp, so strange a stare that she became uneasy. His voice, when he spoke, was brisk, high, clear, friendly; set in this tragic place, it was the caricature of a voice, as though the animal had been programmed for speech from the habits of a human, persuader by profession, whom one saw in the story-boxes telling people messages which were neither good nor important, but merely clever. The handsomeness was itself deformity. Elaine wondered if he had come from goat stock.

"Welcome, young lady," said Charley - is - my - darling. "Now that you are here, how are you going to get out? If we turned her head around, Mabel," said he to the underwoman who had first greeted Elaine, "turned it around eight or ten times, it would come off. Then we could live a few weeks or months longer before our lords and creators found us and put us all to death. What do you say, young lady? Should we kill you?"

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"Kill? You mean, terminate life? You cannot. It is against the law. Even the Instrumentality does not have the right to do that without trial. You can't. You're just underpeople."

"But we will die," said Charley-is-my-darling, flashing his quick intelligent smile, "if you go back out of that door. The police will read about the Brown and Yellow Corridor in your mind and they will flush us out with poison or they will spray disease in here so that we and our children will die."

Elaine stared at him.

The passionate anger did not disturb his smile or his persuasive tones, but the muscles of his eye-sockets and forehead showed the terrible strain. The result was an expression which Elaine had never seen before, a sort of self-control reaching out beyond the limits of insanity.

He stared back at her.

She was not really afraid of him. Underpeople could not twist the heads of real persons; it was contrary to all regulations.

A thought struck her. Perhaps regulations did not apply in a place like this, where illegal animals waited perpetually for sudden death. The being which faced her was strong enough to turn her head around ten times clockwise or counter-clockwise. From her anatomy lessons, she was pretty sure that the head would come off somewhere during that process. She looked at him with interest. Animal-type fear had been conditioned out of her, but she had, she found, an extreme distaste for the termination of life under random circumstances. Perhaps her "witch" training would help. She tried to pretend that he was in fact a man. The diagnosis "hypertension: chronic aggression, now frustrated, leading to overstimulation and neurosis: poor nutritional record: hormone disorder probable" leapt into her mind.

She tried to speak in a new voice.

"I am smaller than you," she said, "and you can 'kill' me just as well later as now. We might as well get acquainted. I'm Elaine, assigned here from Manhome Earth."

The effect was spectacular.

Charley-is-my-darling stepped back. Mabel's mouth dropped open. The others gaped at her. One or two, more quick-witted than the rest, began whispering to their neighbors.

At last Charley-is-my-darling spoke to her. "Welcome, my lady. Can I call you my lady? I guess not. Welcome, Elaine. We are your people. We will do whatever you say. Of course you got in. The lady Panc Ashash sent

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you. She has been telling us for a hundred years that somebody would come from Earth, a real person with an animal name, not a number, and that we should have a child named D'joan ready to take up the threads of destiny. Please, please sit down. Will you have a drink of water? We have no clean vessel here. We are all underpeople here and we have used everything in the place, so that it is contaminated for a real person." A thought struck him. "Baby-baby, do you have a new cup in the kiln?" Apparently he saw someone nod, because he went right on talking. "Get it out then, for our guest, with tongs. New tongs. Do not touch it. Fill it with water from the top of the little waterfall. That way our guest can have an uncontaminated drink. A clean drink." He beamed with a hospitality which was as ridiculous as it was genuine.

Elaine did not have the heart to say she did not want a drink of water.

She waited. They waited.

By now, her eyes had become accustomed to the darkness. She could see that the main corridor was painted a yellow, faded and stained, and a contrasting light brown. She wondered what possible human mind could have selected so ugly a combination. Cross-corridors seemed to open into it; at any rate, she saw illuminated archways further down and people walking out of them briskly. No one can walk briskly and naturally out of a shallow alcove, so she was pretty sure that the archways led to something.

The underpeople, too, she could see. They looked very much like people. Here and there, individuals reverted to the animal type — a horse-man whose muzzle had regrown to its ancestral size, a rat-woman with normal human features except for nylon-like white whiskers, twelve or fourteen on each side of her face, reaching twenty centimeters to either side. One looked very much like a person indeed — a beautiful young woman seated on a bench some eight or ten meters down the corridor, and paying no attention to the crowd, to Mabel, to Charley-is-my-darling or to herself.

"Who is that?" said Elaine, pointing with a nod at the beautiful young woman.

Mabel, relieved from the tension which had seized her when she had asked if Elaine were "death," babbled with a sociability which was outre in this environment. "That's Crawlie."

"What does she do?" asked Elaine.

"She has her pride," said Mabel, her grotesque red face now jolly and eager, her slack

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mouth spraying spittle as she spoke.

"But doesn't she *do* anything?" said Elaine.

Charley-is-my-darling intervened. "Nobody has to do anything here, lady Elaine — "

"It's illegal to call me 'lady,' " said Elaine.

"I'm sorry, human being Elaine. Nobody *has* to do anything at all here. The whole bunch of us are completely illegal. This corridor is a thought-shelter, so that no thoughts can escape or enter it. Wait a bit! Watch the ceiling . . . Now!"

A red glow moved across the ceiling and was gone.

"The ceiling glows," said Charley-is-my-darling, "whenever anything *thinks* against it. The whole tunnel registers 'sewage tank: organic waste' to the outside, so that dim perceptions of life which may escape here are not considered too unaccountable. People built it for their own use, a million years ago."

"They weren't here on Fomalhaut III a million years ago," snapped Elaine. Why, she wondered, did she snap at him? He wasn't a person, just a talking animal who had missed being dropped down the nearest incinerator.

"I'm sorry, Elaine," said Charley-is-my-darling. "I should have said, a long time ago. We underpeople don't get m[illegible] chance to study real history. Bu[illegible] we use this corridor. Somebody with a morbid sense of humor named this place Clown Town. We live along for ten or twenty or a hundred years, and then people or robots find us and kill us all. That's why Mabel was upset. She thought you were death for this time. But you're not. You're *Elaine*. That's wonderful, wonderful." His sly, too-clever face beamed with transparent sincerity. It must have been quite a shock to him to be honest.

"You were going to tell me what the undergirl is for," said Elaine.

"That's Crawlie," said he. "She doesn't do anything. None of us really have to. We're all doomed anyhow. She's a little more honest than the rest of us. She has her pride. She scorns the rest of us. She puts us in our place. She makes everybody feel inferior. We think she is a valuable member of the group. We all have our pride, which is hopeless anyway, but Crawlie has her pride all by herself, without doing anything whatever about it. She sort of reminds us. If we leave her alone, she leaves us alone."

Elaine thought, You're funny things, so much like people, but so inexpert about it, as though

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[redacted] all had to "die" before you really learned what it is to be alive. Aloud, she could only say, "I never met anybody like that."

Crawlie must have sensed that they were talking about her, because she looked at Elaine with a short quick stare of blazing hatred. Crawlie's pretty face locked itself into a glare of concentrated hostility and scorn; then her eyes wandered and Elaine felt that she, Elaine, no longer existed in the thing's mind, except as a rebuke which had been administered and forgotten. She had never seen privacy as impenetrable as Crawlie's. And yet the being, whatever she might have been made from, was very lovely in human terms.

A fierce old hag, covered with mouse-gray fur, rushed up to Elaine. The mouse-woman was the Baby-baby who had been sent on the errand. She held a ceramic cup in a pair of long tongs. Water was in it.

Elaine took the cup.

Sixty to seventy underpeople, including the little girl in the blue dress whom she had seen outside, watched her as she sipped. The water was good. She drank it all. There was a universal exhalation, as though everyone in the corridor had waited for this moment. Elaine started to put the cup down but the old mouse-woman was too quick for her. She took the cup from Elaine, stopping her in mid-gesture and using the tongs, so that the cup would not be contaminated by the touch of an underperson.

"That's right, Baby-baby," said Charley-is-my-darling, "we can talk. It is our custom not to talk with a newcomer until we have offered our hospitality. Let me be frank. We may have to kill you, if this whole business turns out to be a mistake, but let me assure you that if I do kill you, I will do it nicely and without the least bit of malice. Right?"

Elaine did not know what was so right about it, and said so. She visualized her head being twisted off. Apart from the pain and the degradation, it seemed so terribly messy — to terminate life in a sewer with things which did not even have a right to exist.

He gave her no chance to argue, but went on explaining, "Suppose things turn out just right. Suppose that you are the Esther-Elaine-or-Eleanor that we have all been waiting for — the person who will do something to D'joan and bring us all help and deliverance — give us life, in short, *real life* — then what do we do?"

"I don't know where you get all these ideas about me. Why am I Esther-Elaine-or-Eleanor? What do I do to D'joan? Why me?"

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Charley-is-my-darling stared at her as though he could not believe her question. Mabel frowned as though she could not think of the right words to put forth her opinions. Baby-baby, who had glided back to the group with swift mouselike suddenness, looked around as though she expected someone from the rear to speak. She was right. Crawlie turned her face toward Elaine and said, with infinite condescension:

"I did not know that real people were ill-informed or stupid. You seem to be both. We have all our information from the lady Panc Ashash. Since she is dead, she has no prejudices against us underpeople. Since she has not had much of anything to do, she has run through billions and billions of probabilities for us. All of us know what most probabilities come to — sudden death by disease or gas, or maybe being hauled off to the slaughterhouses in big police orinthopters. But the lady Panc Ashash found that perhaps a person with a name like yours would come, a human being with an oldname and not a number name, that that person would meet the Hunter, that she and the Hunter would teach the underchild D'joan a message and that the message would change the worlds. We have kept one child after another named D'joan, waiting for a hundred years. Now you show up. Maybe you are the one. You don't look very competent to me. What are you good for?"

"I'm a witch," said Elaine.

Crawlie could not keep the surprise from showing on her face. "A witch? Really?"

"Yes," said Elaine, rather humbly.

"I wouldn't be one," said Crawlie. "I have my pride." She turned her face away and locked her features in their expression of perennial hurt and disdain.

Charley-is-my-darling whispered to the group nearby, not caring whether Elaine heard his words or not, "That's wonderful, wonderful. She is a witch. A human witch. Perhaps the great day is here! Elaine," said he humbly, "will you please look at us."

Elaine looked. When she stopped to think about where she was, it was incredible that the empty old lower city of Kalma should be just outside, just beyond the wall, and the busy new city a mere thirty-five meters higher. This corridor was a world to itself. It felt like a world, with the ugly yellows and browns, the dim old lights, the stenches of man and animal mixed under intolerably bad ventilation. Baby-baby, Crawlie, Mabel and Charley-is-my-darling were part of

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this world. They were real; but they were outside, outside, so far as Elaine herself was concerned.

"Let me go," she said. "I'll come back some day."

Charley - is - my - darling, who was so plainly the leader, spoke as if in a trance: "You don't understand, Elaine. The only 'going' you are going to go is death. There is no other direction. We can't let the old you go out of this door, not when the lady Panc Ashash has thrust you in to us. Either you go forward to your destiny, to our destiny too, either you do that, and all works out all right, so that you love us, and we love you," he added dreamily, "or else I kill you with my own hands. Right here. Right now. I could give you another clean drink of water first. But that is all. There isn't much choice for you, human being Elaine. What do you think would happen if you went outside?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Elaine.

"Nothing!" snorted Mabel, her face regaining its original indignation. "The police would come flapping by in their ornithopter — "

"And they'd pick your brains," said Baby-baby.

"And they'd know about us," said a tall pale man who had not spoken before.

"And we," said Crawlie from her chair, "would all of us die

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within an hour or two at the longest. Would that matter to you, ma'am and Elaine?"

"And," added Charley-is-my-darling, "they would disconnect the lady Panc Ashash, so that even the recording of that dear dead lady would be gone at last, and there would be no mercy at all left upon this world."

"What is 'mercy'?" asked Elaine.

"It's obvious you never heard of it," said Crawlie.

The old mouse-hag Baby-baby came close to Elaine. She looked up at her and whispered through yellow teeth. "Don't let them frighten you, girl. Death doesn't matter all that much, not even to you true humans with your four hundred years or to us animals with the slaughter-house around the corner. Death is a *when*, not a *what*. It's the same for all of us. Don't be scared. Go straight ahead and you may find mercy and love. They're much richer than death, if you can only find them. Once you do find them, death won't be very important."

"I still don't know *mercy*," said Elaine, "but I thought I knew what *love* was, and I don't expect to find my lover in a dirty old corridor full of underpeople."

"I don't mean that kind of love," laughed Baby-baby, brushing aside Mabel's attempted in-

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terruption with a wave of her hand-paw. The old mouse face was on fire with sheer expressiveness. Elaine could suddenly imagine what Baby-baby had looked like to a mouse-underman when she was young and sleek and gray. Enthusiasm flushed the old features with youth as Baby-baby went on, "I don't mean love for a lover, girl. I mean love for yourself. Love for life. Love for all things living. Love even for me. Your love for me. Can you imagine that?"

Elaine swam through fatigue but she tried to answer the question. She looked in the dim light at the wrinkled old mouse-hag with her filthy clothes and her little red eyes. The fleeting image of the beautiful young mouse-woman had faded away; there was only this cheap, useless old thing, with her inhuman demands and her senseless pleading. People never loved underpeople. They used them, like chairs or doorhandles. Since when did a doorhandle demand the Charter of Ancient Rights?

"No," said Elaine calmly and evenly, "I can't imagine ever loving you."

"I knew it," said Crawlie from her chair. There was triumph in the voice.

Charley-is-my-darling shook his head as if to clear his sight. "Don't you even know who controls Fomalhaut III?"

"The Instrumentality," said Elaine. "But do we have to go on talking? Let me go or kill me or something. This doesn't make sense. I was tired when I got here, and I'm a million years tireder now."

Mabel said, "Take her along."

"All right," said Charley-is-my-darling. "Is the Hunter there?"

The child D'joan spoke. She had stood at the back of the group. "He came in the other way when she came in the front."

Elaine said to Charley-is-my darling, "You lied to me. You said there was only one way."

"I did not lie," said he. "There is only one way for you or me or for the friends of the lady Panc Ashash. The way you came. The other way is death."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "that it leads straight into the slaughterhouses of the men you do not know. The Lords of the Instrumentality who are here on Fomalhaut III. There is the Lord Femtiosex, who is just and without pity. There is the Lord Limaono, who thinks that underpeople are a potential danger and should not have been started in the first place. There is the Lady Goroke, who does not know how to pray, but who tries to

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ponder the mystery of life and who has shown kindnesses to underpeople, as long as the kindnesses were lawful ones. And there is the Lady Arabella Underwood, whose justice no man can understand. Nor underpeople either," he added with a chuckle.

"Who is she? I mean, where did she get the funny name? It doesn't have a number in it. It's as bad as your names. Or my own," said Elaine.

"She's from Old North Australia, the stroon world, on loan to the Instrumentality, and she follows the laws she was born to. The Hunter can go through the rooms and the slaughterhouses of the Instrumentality, but could you? Could I?"

"No," said Elaine.

"Then forward," said Charley-is-my-darling, "to your death or to great wonders. May I lead the way, Elaine?"

Elaine nodded wordlessly.

The mouse-hag Baby-baby patted Elaine's sleeve, her eyes alive with strange hope. As Elaine passed Crawlie's chair, the proud, beautiful girl looked straight at her, expressionless, deadly and severe. The dog-girl D'joan followed the little procession as if she had been invited.

They walked down and down and down. Actually, it could not have been a full half-kilometer. But with the endless browns and yellows, the strange shapes of the lawless and untended underpeople, the stenches and the thick heavy air, Elaine felt as if she were leaving all known worlds behind.

In fact, she was doing precisely that, but it did not occur to her that her own suspicion might be true.

V

At the end of the corridor there was a round gate with a door of gold or brass.

Charley-is-my-darling stopped.

"I can't go further," he said. "You and D'joan will have to go on. This is the forgotten antechamber between the tunnel and the upper palace. The Hunter is there. Go on. You're a person. It is safe. Underpeople usually die in there. Go on." He nudged her elbow and pulled the sliding door apart.

"But the little girl," said Elaine.

"She's not a girl," Charley-is-my-darling. "She's just a dog — as I'm not a man, just a goat brightened and cut and trimmed to look like a man. If you come back, Elaine, I will love you like God or I will kill you. It depends."

"Depends on what?" asked Elaine. "And what is 'God'?"

Charley-is-my-darling smiled

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the quick tricky smile which was wholly insincere and completely friendly, both at the same time. It was probably the trademark of his personality in ordinary times. "You'll find out about God somewhere else, if you do. Not from us. And the depending is something you'll know for yourself. You won't have to wait for me to tell you. Go along now. The whole thing will be over in the next few minutes."

"But D'joan?" persisted Elaine.

"If it doesn't work," said Charley-is-my-darling, "we can always raise another D'joan and wait for another you. The lady Panc Ashash has promised us that. Go on in!"

He pushed her roughly, so that she stumbled through. Bright light dazzled her and the clean air tasted as good as fresh water on her first day out of the spaceship pod.

The little dog-girl had trotted in beside her.

The door, gold or brass, clanged to behind them.

Elaine and D'joan stood still, side by side, looking forward and upward.

There are many famous painting of that scene. Most of the paintings show Elaine in rags with the distorted, suffering face of a witch. This is strictly unhistorical. She was wearing her everyday culottes, blouse and twin over-the-shoulder purses when she went in the other end of Clown Town. That was the usual dress on Fomalhaut III at that time. She had done nothing at all to spoil her clothes, so she must have looked the same when she came out. And D'joan — well, everyone knows what D'joan looked like.

The Hunter met them.

The Hunter met them, and new worlds began.

He was a shortish man, with black curly hair, black eyes that danced with laughter, broad shoulders and long legs. He walked with a quick sure step. He kept his hands quiet at his side, but the hands did not look tough and calloused, as though they had been terminating lives, even the lives of animals.

"Come up and sit down," he greeted them. "I've been waiting for you both."

Elaine stumbled upward and forward. "Waiting?" she gasped.

"Nothing mysterious," he said. "I had the viewscreen on. The one into the tunnel. Its connections are shielded, so the police could not have peeped it."

Elaine stopped dead still. The little dog-girl, one step behind her, stopped too. She tried to draw herself up to her full height. She was about the same tallness that he was. It was dif-

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ficult, since he stood four or five steps above them. She managed to keep her voice even when she said:

"You know, then?"

"What?"

"All those things they said."

"Sure I know them," he smiled. "Why not?"

"But," stammered Elaine, "about you and me being lovers? That too?"

"That too," he smiled again. "I've been hearing it half my life. Come on up, sit down and have something to eat. We have a lot of things to do tonight, if history is to be fulfilled through us. What do you eat, little girl?" said he kindly to D'joan. "Raw meat or people food?"

"I'm a finished girl," said D'joan, "so I prefer chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream."

"That you shall have," said the Hunter. "Come, both of you, and sit down."

They had topped the steps. A luxurious table, already set, was waiting for them. There were three couches around it. Elaine looked for the third person who would join them. Only as she sat down did she realize that he meant to invite the dog-child.

He saw her surprise, but did not comment on it directly.

Instead, he spoke to D'joan.

"You know me, girl, don't you?"

The child smiled and relaxed for the first time since Elaine had seen her. The dog-girl was really strikingly beautiful when the tension went out of her. The wariness, the quietness, the potential disquiet — these were dog qualities. Now the child seemed wholly human and mature far beyond her years. Her white face had dark, dark brown eyes.

"I've seen you lots of times, Hunter. And you've told me what would happen if I turned out to be *the* D'joan. How I would spread the word and meet great trials. How I might die and might not, but people and underpeople would remember my name for thousands of years. You've told me almost everything I know — Except the things that I can't talk to you about. You know them too, but you won't talk, will you?" said the little girl imploringly.

"I know you've been to Earth," said the Hunter.

"Don't say it! Please don't say it!" pleaded the girl.

"Earth! Manhome itself?" cried Elaine. "How, by the stars, did you get there?"

The Hunter intervened. "Don't press her, Elaine. It's a big secret, and she wants to keep it. You'll find out more tonight than mortal woman was ever told before."

"What does 'mortal' mean?"

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asked Elaine, who disliked antique words.

"It just means having a termination of life."

"That's foolish," said Elaine. "Everything terminates. Look at those poor messy people who went on beyond the legal four hundred years." She looked around. Rich black-and-red curtains hung from ceiling to floor. On one side of the room there was a piece of furniture she had never seen before. It was like a table, but it had little broad flat doors on the front, reaching from side to side; it was richly ornamented with unfamiliar woods and metals. Nevertheless, she had more important things to talk about than furniture.

She looked directly at the Hunter (no organic disease; wounded in left arm at an earlier period; somewhat excessive exposure to sunlight; might need correction for near vision) and demanded of him:

"Am I captured by you, too?"

"Captured?"

"You're a Hunter. You hunt things. To kill them, I suppose. That underman back there, the goat who calls himself Charley-is-my-darling — "

"He never does!" cried the dog-girl, D'joan, interrupting.

"Never does what" said Elaine, cross at being interrupted.

"He never calls himself that. Other people, underpeople I mean, call him that. His name is Balthasar, but nobody uses it."

"What does it matter, little girl?" said Elaine. "I'm talking about my life. Your friend said he would take my life from me if something did not happen."

Neither D'joan nor the Hunter said anything.

Elaine heard a frantic edge go into her voice, "You heard it!" She turned to the Hunter, "You saw it on the view screen."

The Hunter's voice was serenity and assurance: "We three have things to do before this night is out. We won't get them done if you are frightened or worried. I know the underpeople, but I know the Lords of the Instrumentality as well — all four of them, right here. The Lords Limaono and Femtiosex and the Lady Goroke. And the Norstilian, too. They will protect you. Charley-is-my-darling might want to take your life from you because he is worried, afraid that the tunnel of Englok, where you just were, will be discovered. I have ways of protecting him and yourself as well. Have confidence in me for a while. That's not so hard, is it?"

"But," protested Elaine, "the man — or the goat — or whatever he was, Charley-is-my-darling, he said it would all hap-

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pen right away, as soon as I came up here with you."

"How can anything happen," said little D'joan, "if you keep talking all the time?"

The Hunter smiled.

"That's right," he said. "We've talked enough. Now we must become lovers."

Elaine jumped to her feet, "Not with me, you don't. Not with her here. Not when I haven't found my work to do. I'm a witch. I'm supposed to do something, but I've never really found out what it was."

"Look at this," said the Hunter calmly, walking over to the wall, and pointing with his finger at an intricate circular design.

Elaine and D'joan both looked at it.

The Hunter spoke again, his voice urgent. "Do you see it, D'joan? Do you really see it? The ages turn, waiting for this moment, little child. Do you see it? Do you see yourself in it?"

Elaine looked at the little dog-girl. D'joan had almost stopped breathing. She stared at the curious symmetrical pattern as though it were a window into enchanting worlds.

The Hunter roared, at the top of his voice, "D'joan! Joan! Joanie!"

The child made no response.

The Hunter stepped over to the child, slapped her gently on the cheek, shouted again. D'joan continued to stare at the intricate design.

"Now," said the Hunter, "you and I make love. The child is absent in a world of happy dreams. That design is a mandala, something left over from the unimaginable past. It locks the human consciousness in place. D'joan will not see us or hear us. We cannot help her go toward her destiny unless you and I make love first."

Elaine, her hand to her mouth, tried to inventory symptoms as a means of keeping her familiar thoughts in balance. It did not work. A relaxation spread over her, a happiness and quiet that she had not once felt since her childhood.

"Did you think," said the Hunter, "that I hunted with my body and killed with my hands? Didn't anyone ever tell you that the game comes to me rejoicing, that the animals die while they scream with pleasure? I'm a telepath, and I work under license. And I have my license now from the dead lady Panc Ashash."

Elaine knew that they had come to the end of the talking. Trembling, happy, frightened, she fell into his arms and let him lead her over to the couch at the side of the black-and-gold room.

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A thousand years later, she was kissing his ear and murmuring loving words at him, words that she did not even realize she knew. She must, she thought, have picked up more from the story-boxes than she ever realized.

"You're my love," she said, "my only one, my darling. Never, never leave me; never throw me away. Oh, Hunter, I love you so!"

"We part" he said, "before tomorrow is gone, but shall meet again. Do you realize that all this has only been a little more than an hour?"

Elaine blushed. "And I," she stammered, "I — I'm hungry."

"Natural enough," said the Hunter. "Pretty soon we can waken the little girl and eat together. And then history will happen, unless somebody walks in and stops us."

"But, darling," said Elaine, "can't we go on — at least for a while? A year? A month? A day? Put the little girl back in the tunnel for a while."

"Not really," said the Hunter, "but I'll sing you the song that came into my mind about you and me. I've been thinking bits of it for a long time, but now it has really happened. Listen."

He held her two hands in his two hands, looked easily and frankly into her eyes. There was no hint in him of telepathic power.

He sang to her the song which we know as *I Love You and Lost You.*

I knew you, and loved you,
  and won you, in Kalma.
I loved you, and won you,
  and lost you, my darling!
The dark skies of Waterrock
  swept down against us,
Lightning-lit only
  by our own love, my lovely!

Our time was a short time,
  a sharp hour of glory —
We tasted delight
  and we suffer denial.
The tale of us two
  is a bittersweet story,
Short as a shot
  but as long as death.

We met and we loved,
  and vainly we plotted
To rescue beauty
  from a smothering war.
Time had no time for us,
  the minutes, no mercy.
We have loved and lost,
  and the world goes on.

We have lost and have kissed,
  and have parted, my darling!
All that we have,
  we must save in our hearts, love.
The memory of beauty
  and the beauty of memory . . .
I've loved you and won you
  and lost you, in Kalma.

His fingers, moving in the air, produced a soft organ-like music in the room. She had noticed music-beams before, but she had never had one played for herself.

By the time he was through singing, she was sobbing. It was all so true, so wonderful, so heartbreaking.

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He had kept her right hand in his left hand. Now he released her suddenly. He stood up.

"Let's work first. Eat later. Someone is near us."

He walked briskly over to the little dog-girl, who was still seated on the chair looking at the mandala with open, sleeping eyes. He took her head firmly and gently between his two hands and turned her eyes away from the design. She struggled momentarily against his hands and then seemed to wake up fully.

She smiled. "That was nice. I rested. How long was it — five minutes?"

"More than that," said the Hunter gently. "I want you to take Elaine's hand."

A few hours ago, and Elaine would have protested at the grotesquerie of holding hands with an underperson. This time, she said nothing, but obeyed: she looked with much love toward the Hunter.

"You two don't have to know much," said the Hunter. "You, D'joan, are going to get everything that is in our minds and in our memories. You will become us, both of us. Forevermore. You will meet your glorious fate."

The little girl shivered. "Is this really the day?"

"It is," said the Hunter. "Future ages will remember this night."

"And you, Elaine," said he to her, "have nothing to do but to love me and to stand very still. Do you understand? You will see tremendous things, some of them frightening. But they won't be real. Just stand still."

Elaine nodded wordlessly.

"In the name," said the Hunter, "of the First Forgotten One, in the name of the Second Forgotten One, in the name of the Third Forgotten One. For the love of people, that will give them life. For the love that will give them a clean death and true . . ." His words were clear but Elaine could not understand them.

The day of days was here.

She knew it.

She did not know how she knew it, but she did.

The lady Panc Ashash crawled up through the solid floor, wearing her friendly robot body. She came near to Elaine and murmured:

"Have no fear, no fear."

Fear? thought Elaine. This is no time for fear. It is much too interesting.

As if to answer Elaine, a clear, strong, masculine voice spoke out of nowhere:

This is the time for the daring sharing.

When these words were spoken, it was as if a bubble had been

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pricked. Elaine felt her personality and D'joan mingling. With ordinary telepathy, it would have been frightening. But this was not communication. It was being.

She had become Joan. She felt the clean little body in its tidy clothes. She became aware of the girl-shape again. It was oddly pleasant and familiar, in terribly faraway kinds of feeling, to remember that she had had that shape once — the smooth, innocent flat chest; the uncomplicated groin; the fingers which still felt as though they were separate and alive in extending from the palm of the hand. But the mind — *that* child's mind! It was like an enormous museum illuminated by rich stained-glass windows, cluttered with variegated heaps of beauty and treasure, scented by strange incense which moved slowly in unpropelled air. D'joan had a mind which reached all the way back to the color and glory of man's antiquity. D'joan had been a Lord of the Instrumentality, a monkey-man riding the ships of space, a friend of the dear dead lady Panc Ashash, and Panc Ashash herself.

No wonder the child was rich and strange: she had been made the heir of all the ages.

This is the time for the glaring top of the truth at the wearing sharing, said the nameless, clear, loud voice in her mind. *This is the time for you and him.*

Elaine realized that she was responding to hypnotic suggestions which the Lady Panc Ashash had put into the mind of the little dog-girl — suggestions which were triggered into full potency the moment that the three of them came into telepathic contact.

For a fraction of a second, she perceived nothing but astonishment within herself. She saw nothing but herself — every detail, every secrecy, every thought and feeling and contour of flesh. She was curiously aware of how her breasts hung from her chest, the tension of her belly-muscles holding her female backbone straight and erect —

Female backbone?

Why had she thought that she had a female backbone?

And then she knew.

She was following the Hunter's mind as his awareness rushed through her body, drank it up, enjoyed it, loved it all over again, this time from the inside out.

She knew somehow that the little dog-girl watched everything quietly, wordlessly, drinking in from them both the full nuance of being truly human.

Even with the delirium, she sensed embarrassment. It might be a dream, but it was still too much. She began to close her mind and the thought had come

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to her that she should take her hands away from the hands of Hunter and the dog-child.

But then fire came . . .

VI

Fire came up from the floor, burning about them intangibly. Elaine felt nothing . . . but she could sense the touch of the little girl's hand.

Flames around the dames, games, said an idiot voice from nowhere.

Fire around the pyre, sire, said another.

Hot is what we got, tot, said a third.

Suddenly Elaine remembered Earth, but it was not the Earth she knew. She was herself D'joan, and not D'joan. She was a tall, strong monkey-man, indistinguishable from a true human being. She/he had tremendous alertness in her/his heart as he/she walked across the Peace Square at An-fang, the Old Square at An-fang, where all things begin. She/he noticed a discrepency. Some of the buildings were not there.

The real Elaine thought to herself, "So that's what they did with the child — printed her with the memories of other underpeople. Other ones, who dared things and went places."

The fire stopped.

Elaine saw the black-and-gold room clean and untroubled for a moment before the green white-topped ocean rushed in. The water poured over the three of them without getting them wet in the least. The greenness washed around them without pressure, without suffocation.

Elaine was the Hunter. Enormous dragons floated in the sky above Fomalhaut III. She felt herself wandering across a hill, singing with love and yearning. She had the Hunter's own mind, his own memory. The dragon sensed him, and flew down. The enormous reptilian wings were more beautiful than a sunset, more delicate than orchids. Their beat in the air was as gentle as the breath of a baby. She was not only Hunter but dragon too; she felt the minds meeting and the dragon dying in bliss, in joy.

Somehow the water was gone. So too were D'joan and the Hunter. She was not in the room. She was taut, tired, worried Elaine, looking down a nameless street for hopeless destinations. She had to do things which could never be done. The wrong me, the wrong time, the wrong place — and I'm alone, I'm alone, I'm alone, her mind screamed. The room was back again; so too were the hands of the Hunter and the little girl.

Mist began rising —

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Another dream? thought Elaine. Aren't we done?

But there was another voice somewhere, a voice which grated like the rasp of a saw cutting through bone, like the grind of a broken machine still working at ruinous top speed. It was an evil voice, a terror-filling voice.

Perhaps this really was the "death" which the tunnel underpeople had mistaken her for.

The Hunter's hand released hers. She let go of D'joan.

There was a strange woman in the room. She wore the baldric of authority and the leotards of a traveler.

Elaine stared at her.

"You'll be punished," said the terrible voice, which now was coming out of the woman.

"Wh — wh — what?" stammered Elaine.

"You're conditioning an underperson without authority. I don't know who you are, but the Hunter should know better. The animal will have to die, of course," said the woman, looking at little D'joan.

Hunter muttered, half in greeting to the stranger, half in explanation to Elaine, as though he did not know what else to say:

"Lady Arabella Underwood."

Elaine could not bow to her, though she wanted to.

The surprise came from the little dog girl.

I am your sister Joan, she said, *and no animal to you.*

The lady Arabella seemed to have trouble hearing. (Elaine herself could not tell whether she was hearing spoken words or taking the message with her mind.)

I am Joan and I love you.

The lady Arabella shook herself as though water had splashed on her. "Of course you're Joan. You love me. And I love you."

People and underpeople meet on the terms of love.

"Love. Love, of course. You're a good little girl. And so right."

You will forget me, said Joan, *until we meet and love again.*

"Yes, darling. Good-by for now."

At last D'joan did use words. She spoke to the Hunter and Elaine, saying, "It is finished. I know who I am and what I must do. Elaine had better come with me. We will see you soon, Hunter — if we live."

Elaine looked at the Lady Arabella who stood stock still, staring like a blind women. The Hunter nodded at Elaine with his wise, kind, rueful smile.

The little girl led Elaine down, down, down to the door which led back to the tunnel of Englok. Just as they went through the

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brass door, Elaine heard the voice of the Lady Arabella say to the Hunter:

"What are you doing here all by yourself? The room smells funny. Have you had animals here? Have you killed something?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the Hunter as D'joan and Elaine stepped through the door.

"What?" cried the Lady Arabella.

Hunter must have raised his voice to a point of penetrating emphasis because he wanted the other two to hear him, too:

"I have killed, ma'am," he said, "as always — with love. This time it was a system."

They slipped through the door while the Lady Arabella's protesting voice, heavy with authority and inquiry, was still sweeping against the Hunter.

Joan led. Her body was the body of a pretty child, but her personality was the full awakening of all the underpeople who had been imprinted on her. Elaine could not understand it, because Joan was still the little dog-girl, but Joan was now also Elaine, also Hunter. There was no doubt about their movement; the child, no longer an undergirl, led the way and Elaine, human or not, followed.

The door closed behind them. They were back in the brown-and-yellow corridor. Most of the underpeople were awaiting them. Dozens stared at them. The heavy animal-human smells of the old tunnel rolled against them like thick, slow waves. Elaine felt the beginning of a headache at her temples, but she was much too alert to care.

For a moment, D'joan and Elaine confronted the underpeople.

Most of you have seen paintings or theatricals based upon this scene. The most famous of all is, beyond doubt, the fantastic "one-line drawing" of San Shigonanda — the board of the background almost uniformly gray, with a hint of brown and yellow on the left, a hint of black and red on the right, and in the center the strange white line, almost a smear of paint, which somehow suggests the bewildered girl Elaine and the doom-blessed child Joan.

Charley-is-my-darling was, of course, the first to find his voice. (Elaine did not notice him as a goat-man any more. He seemed an earnest, friendly man of middle age, fighting poor health and an uncertain life with great courage. She now found his smile persuasive and charming. Why, thought Elaine, didn't I see him that way before? Have I changed?)

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Charley - is - my - darling had spoken before Elaine found her wits. "He did it. Are you D'joan?"

"Am I D'joan?" said the child, asking the crowd of deformed, weird people in the tunnel. "Do you think I am D'joan?"

"No! No! You are the lady who was promised — you are the bridge-to-man," cried a tall yellow-haired old woman, whom Elaine could not remember seeing before. The woman flung herself to her knees in front of the child, and tried to get D'joan's hand. The child held her hands away, quietly, but firmly, so the woman buried her face in the child's skirt and wept.

"I am Joan," said the child, "and I am dog no more. You are people now, people, and if you die with me, you will die men. Isn't that better than it has ever been before? And you, Ruthia," said she to the woman at her feet, "stand up and stop crying. Be glad. These are the days that I shall be with you. I know your children were all taken away and killed, Ruthie, and I am sorry. I cannot bring them back. But I give you womanhood. I have even made a person out of Elaine."

"Who are you?" said Charley-is-my-darling. "Who are you?"

"I'm the little girl you put out to live or died an hour ago. But now I am Joan, not D'joan, and I bring you a weapon. You are women. You are men. You are people. You can use the weapon."

"What weapon?" The voice was Crawlie's, from about the third row of spectators.

"Life and life-with," said the child Joan.

"Don't be a fool," said Crawlie. "What's the weapon? Don't give us words. We've had words and death ever since the world of underpeople began. That's what *people* give us — good words, fine principles and cold murder, year after year, generation after generation. Don't tell me I'm a person — I'm not. I'm a bison and I know it. An animal fixed up to look like a person. Give me a something to kill with. Let me die fighting."

Little Joan looked incongruous in her young body and short stature, still wearing the little blue smock in which Elaine had first seen her. She commanded the room. She lifted her hand and the buzz of low voices, which had started while Crawlie was yelling, dropped off to silence again.

"Crawlie," she said, in a voice that carried all the way down the hall, "peace be with you in the everlasting now."

Crawlie scowled. She did have the grace to look puzzled at Joan's message to her, but she did not speak.

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"Don't talk to me, dear people," said little Joan. "Get used to me first. I bring you life-with. It's more than love. Love's a hard, sad, dirty word, a cold word, an old word. It says too much and it promises too little. I bring you something much bigger than love. If you're alive, you're alive. If you're alive-with, then you know the other life is there too— both of you, any of you, all of you. Don't do anything. Don't grab, don't clench, don't possess. Just *be*. That's the weapon. There's not a flame or a gun or a poison that can stop it."

"I want to believe you," said Mable, "but I don't know how to."

"Don't believe me," said little Joan. "Just wait and let things happen. Let me through, good people. I have to sleep for a while. Elaine will watch me while I sleep and when I get up, I will tell you why you are underpeople no longer."

Joan started to move forward —

A wild ululating screech split the corridor.

Everyone looked around to see where it came from.

It was almost like the shriek of a fighting bird, but the sound came from among them.

Elaine saw it first.

Crawlie had a knife and just

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as the cry ended, she flung herself on Joan.

Child and woman fell on the floor, their dresses a tangle. The large hand rose up twice with the knife, and the second time it came up red.

From the hot shocking burn in her side, Elaine knew that she must herself have taken one of the stabs. She could not tell whether Joan was still living.

The undermen pulled Crawlie off the child.

Crawlie was white with rage, "Words, words, words. She'll kill us all with her words."

A large, fat man with the muzzle of a bear on the front of an otherwise human-looking head and body, stepped around the man who held Crawlie. He gave her one tremendous slap. She dropped to the floor unconscious. The knife, stained with blood, fell on the old worn carpet. (Elaine thought automatically: restorative for her later; check neck vertebrae; no problem of bleeding.)

For the first time in her life, Elaine functioned as a wholly efficient witch. She helped the people pull the clothing from little Joan. The tiny body, with the heavy purple-dark blood pumping out from just below the rib-cage, looked hurt and fragile. Elaine reached in her left handbag. She had a surgical radar pen. She held it to her eye and looked through the flesh, up and down the wound. The peritoneum was punctured, the liver cut, the upper folds of the large intestine were perforated in two places. When she saw this, she knew what to do. She brushed the bystanders aside and got to work.

First she glued up the cuts from the inside out, starting with the damage to the liver. Each touch of the organic adhesive was preceded by a tiny spray of re-coding powder, designed to reinforce the capacity of the injured organ to restore itself. The probing, pressing, squeezing, took eleven minutes. Before it was finished, Joan had awakened, and was murmuring:

"Am I dying?"

"Not at all," said Elaine, "unless these human medicines poison your dog blood."

"Who did it?"

"Crawlie."

"Why?" said the child. "Why? Is she hurt too? Where is she?"

"Not as hurt as she is going to be," said the goat-man, Charley-is-my-darling. "If she lives, we'll fix her up and try her and put her to death."

"No, you won't," said Joan. "You're going to love her. You must."

The goat-man looked bewildered.

He turned in his perplexity to

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Elaine. "Better have a look at Crawlie," said he. "Maybe Orson killed her with that slap. He's a bear, you know."

"So I saw," said Elaine, drily. What did the man think that thing looked like, a hummingbird?

She walked over to the body of Crawlie. As soon as she touched the shoulders, she knew that she was in for trouble. The outer appearances were human, but the musculature beneath was not. She suspected that the laboratories had left Crawlie terribly strong, keeping the buffalo strength and obstinacy for some remote industrial reason of their own. She took out a brainlink, a close-range telepathic hookup which worked only briefly and slightly, to see if the mind still functioned. As she reached for Crawlie's head to attach it, the unconscious girl sprang suddenly to life, jumped to her feet and said:

"No, you don't! you don't peep me, you dirty human!"

"Crawlie, stand still."

"Don't boss me, you monster!"

"Crawlie, that's a bad thing to say." It was eerie to hear such a commanding voice coming from the throat and mouth of a small child. Small she might have been, but Joan commanded the scene.

"I don't care what I say. You all hate me."

"That's not true, Crawlie."

"You're a dog and now you're a person. You're born a traitor. Dogs have always sided with people. You hated me even before you went into that room and changed into something else. Now you are going to kill us all."

"We may die, Crawlie, but I won't do it."

"Well, you hate me, anyhow. You've always hated me."

"You may not believe it," said Joan, "but I've always loved you. You were the prettiest woman in our whole corridor."

Crawlie laughed. The sound gave Elaine gooseflesh. "Suppose I believed it. How could I live if I thought that people loved me? If I believed you, I would have to tear myself to pieces, to break my brains on the wall, to do — " The laughter changed to sobs, but Crawlie managed to resume talking: "You things are so stupid that you don't even know that you're monsters. You're not people. You never will be people. I'm one of you myself. I'm honest enough to admit what I am. We're dirt, we're nothing, we're things that are less than machines. We hide in the earth like dirt and when people kill us they do not weep. At least we were hiding. Now you come along, you and your tame human woman — " Crawlie

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glared briefly at Elaine — "and you try to change even that. I'll kill you again if I can, you dirt, you slut, you dog! What are you doing with that child's body? We don't even know who you are now. Can you tell us?"

The bear-man had moved up close to Crawlie, unnoticed by her, and was ready to slap her down again if she moved against little Joan.

Joan looked straight at him and with a mere movement of her eyes she commanded him not to strike.

"I'm tired," she said, "I'm tired, Crawlie. I'm a thousand years old when I am not even five. And I am Elaine now, and I am Hunter too, and I am the Lady Panc Ashash, and I know a great many more things that I thought I would ever know. I have work to do, Crawlie, because I love you, and I think I will die soon. But please, good people, first let me rest."

The bear-man was on Crawlie's right. On her left, there had moved up a snake-woman. The face was pretty and human, except for the thin forked tongue which ran in and out of the mouth like a dying flame. She had good shoulders and hips but no breasts at all. She wore empty golden brassiere cups which swung against her chest. Her hands looked as though they might be stronger than steel. Crawlie started to move toward Joan, and the snake-woman hissed.

It was the snake hiss of Old Earth.

For a second, every animal-person in the corridor stopped breathing. They all stared at the snake-woman. She hissed again, looking straight at Crawlie. The sound was an abomination in that narrow space. Elaine saw that Joan tightened up like a little dog, Charley-is-my-darling looked as though he was ready to leap twenty meters in one jump, and Elaine herself felt an impulse to strike, to kill, to destroy. The hiss was a challenge to them all.

The snake-woman looked around calmly, fully aware of the attention she had obtained.

"Don't worry, dear people. See, I'm using Joan's name for all of us. I'm not going to hurt Crawlie, not unless she hurts Joan. But if she hurts Joan, if anybody hurts Joan, they will have me to deal with. You have a good idea who I am. We S-people have great strength, high intelligence and no fear at all. You know we cannot breed. People have to make us one by one, out of ordinary snakes. Do not cross me, dear people. I want to learn about this new love which Joan is bringing, and

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nobody is going to hurt Joan while I am here. Do you hear me, people? Nobody. Try it, and you die. I think I could kill almost all of you before I died, even if you all attacked me at once. Do you hear me, people? *Leave Joan alone*. That goes for you, too, you soft human woman. I am not afraid of you either. You there," said she to the bear-man, "pick little Joan up and carry her to a quiet bed. She must rest. She must be quiet for a while. You be quiet too, all you people, or you will meet me. Me." Her black eyes roved across their faces. The snake-woman moved forward and they parted in front of her, as though she were the only solid being in a throng of ghosts.

Her eyes rested a moment on Elaine. Elaine met the gaze, but it was an uncomfortable thing to do. The black eyes with neither eyebrow nor lashes seemed full of intelligence and devoid of emotion. Orson, the bear-man, followed obediently behind. He carried little Joan.

As the child passed Elaine she tried to stay awake. She murmured, "Make me bigger. Please make me bigger. Right away."

"I don't know how . . ." said Elaine.

The child struggled to full awakening. "I'll have work to do. Work . . . and maybe my death to die. It will all be wasted if I am this little. Make me bigger."

"But — " protested Elaine again.

"If you don't know, ask the lady."

"What lady?"

The S-woman had paused, listening to the conversation. She cut in.

"The Lady Panc Ashash, of course. The dead one. Do you think that a living Lady of the Instrumentality would do anything but kill us all?"

As the snake-woman and Orson carried Joan away, Charley-is-my-darling came up to Elaine and said, "Do you want to go?"

"Where?"

"To the Lady Panc Ashash, of course."

"Me?" said Elaine. "Now?" said Elaine, even more emphatically. "Of course not," said Elaine, pronouncing each word as though it were a law. "What do you think I am? A few hours ago I did not even know that you existed. I wasn't sure about the word 'death.' I just assumed that everything terminated at four hundred years, the way it should. It's been hours of danger, and everybody has been threatening everybody else for all that time. I'm tired and I'm sleepy and I'm dirty, and I've got to take care of myself, and besides — "

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She stopped suddenly and bit her lip. She had started to say, and besides, my body is all worn out with that dream-like love-making which the Hunter and I had together. That was not the business of Charley-is-my-darling: he was goat enough as he was. His mind was goatish and would not see the dignity of it all.

The goat-man said, very gently, "You are making history, Elaine, and when you make history you cannot always take care of all the little things too. Are you happier and more important than you ever were before? Yes? Aren't you a different you from the person who met Balthasar just a few hours ago?"

Elaine was taken aback by the seriousness. She nodded.

"Stay hungry and tired. Stay dirty. Just a little longer. Time must not be wasted. You can talk to the Lady Panc Ashash. Find out what we must do about little Joan. When you come back with further instructions, I will take care of you myself. This tunnel is not as bad a town as it looks. We will have everything you could need, in the Room of Englok. Englok himself built it, long ago. Work just a little longer, and then you can eat and rest. We have everything here. 'I am the citizen of no mean city.' But first you must help Joan. You love Joan, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," she said.

"Then help us just a little bit more."

With death? she thought. With murder? With violation of law? But — but it was all for Joan.

It was thus that Elaine went to the camouflaged door, went out under the open sky again, saw the great Saucer of Upper Kalma reaching out over the Old Lower City. She talked to the voice of the Lady Panc Ashash, and obtained certain instructions, together with other messages. Later, she was able to repeat them, but she was too tired to make out their real sense.

She staggered back to the place in the wall where she thought the door to be, leaned against it, and nothing happened.

"Further down, Elaine, further down. Hurry! When I used to be me, I too got tired," came the strong whisper of the Lady Panc Ashash, "but do hurry!"

Elaine stepped away from the wall, looking at it.

A beam of light struck her.

The Instrumentality had found her.

She rushed wildly at the wall. The door gaped briefly. The strong welcome hand of Charley-is-my-darling helped her in.

"The light! The light!" cried Elaine. "I've killed us all. They saw me."

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"Not yet," smiled the goat-man, with his quick crooked intelligent smile. "I may not be educated, but I am pretty smart."

He reached toward the inner gate, glanced back at Elaine appraisingly, and then shoved a man-sized robot through the door.

"There it goes, a sweeper about your size. No memory bank. A worn-out brain. Just simple motivations. If they come down to see what they thought they saw, they will see this instead. We keep a bunch of these at the door. We don't go out much, but when we do, it's handy to have these to cover up with."

He took her by the arm. "While you eat, you can tell me. Can we make her bigger . . .?"

"Who?"

"Joan, of course. Our Joan. That's what you went to find out for us."

Elaine had to inventory her own mind to see what the Lady Panc Ashash had said on that subject. In a moment she remembered.

"You need a pod. And a jelly bath. And narcotics, because it will hurt. Four hours."

"Wonderful," said Charley-is-my-darling, leading her deeper and deeper into the tunnel.

"But what's the use of it," said Elaine, "if I've ruined us all? The Instrumentality saw me coming in. They will follow. They will kill all of you, even Joan. Where is the Hunter? Shouldn't I sleep first?" She felt her lips go thick with fatigue; she had not rested or eaten since she took that chance on the strange little door between Waterrocky Road and the Shopping Bar.

"You're safe, Elaine, you're safe," said Charley-is-my-darling, his sly smile very warm and his smooth voice carrying the ring of sincere conviction. For himself, he did not believe a word of it. He thought they were all in danger, but there was no point in terrifying Elaine. Elaine was the only real person on their side, except for the Hunter, who was a strange one, almost like an animal himself, and for the Lady Panc Ashash, who was very benign, but who was, after all, a dead person. He was frightened himself, but he was afraid of fear. Perhaps they were all doomed.

In a way, he was right.

VII

The Lady Arabella Underwood had called the Lady Goroke.

"Something has tampered with my mind."

The Lady Goroke felt very shocked. She threw back the inquiry. Put a probe on it.

"I did. Nothing."

Nothing?

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More shock for the Lady Goroke, Sound the alert, then.

"Oh, no. Oh, no, no. It was a friendly, nice tampering." The Lady Arabella Underwood, being an Old North Australian, was rather formal: she always thought full words at her friends, even in telepathic contact. She never sent mere raw ideas.

But that's utterly unlawful. You're part of the Instrumentality. It's a crime! thought the Lady Goroke.

She got a giggle for reply.

You laugh . . .? she inquired.

"I just thought a new Lord might be here. From the Instrumentality. Having a look at me."

The Lady Goroke was very proper and easily shocked. We wouldn't do that!

The Lady Arabella thought to herself but did not transmit, "Not to you, my dear. You're a blooming prude." To the other she transmitted, "Forget it then."

Puzzled and worried, the Lady Goroke thought: Well, all right. Break?

"Right-ho. Break."

The Lady Goroke frowned to herself. She slapped her wall. Planet Central, she thought at it.

A mere man sat at a desk.

"I am the lady Goroke," she said.

"Of course, my lady," he replied.

"Police fever, one degree. One degree only. Till rescinded. Clear?"

"Clear, my lady. The entire planet?"

"Yes," she said.

"Do you wish to give a reason?" his voice was respectful and routine.

"Must I?"

"Of course not, my lady."

"None given, then. Close."

He saluted and his image faded from the wall.

She raised her mind to the level of a light clear call. Instrumentality Only — Instrumentality Only. I have raised the Police fever level 1° by command. Reason, personal disquiet. You know my voice. You know me. Goroke.

Far across the city — a police ornithopter flapped slowly down the street.

The police robot was photographing a sweeper, the most elaborately malfunctioning sweeper he had ever seen.

The sweeper raced down the road at unlawful speeds, approaching three hundred kilometers an hour, stopped with a sizzle of plastic on stone, and began picking dust-motes off the pavement.

When the ornithopter reached it, the sweeper took off again, rounded two or three corners at tremendous speed and then settled down to its idiot job.

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The third time this happened, the robot in the ornithopter put a disabling slug through it, flew down and picked it up with the claws of his machine.

He saw it in close view.

"Birdbrain. Old model. Birdbrain. Good they don't use those any more. The thing could have hurt A Man. Now, I'm printed from a mouse, a real mouse with lots and lots of brains."

He flew toward the central junkyard with the worn-out sweeper. The sweeper, crippled but still conscious, was trying to pick dust off the iron claws which held it.

Below them, the Old City twisted out of sight with its odd geometrical lights. The new city, bathed in its soft perpetual glow, shone out against the night of Fomalhaut III. Beyond them, the everlasting ocean boiled in its private storms.

On the actual stage the actors cannot do much with the scene of the interlude, where Joan was cooked in a single night from the size of a child five years old to the tallness of a miss fifteen or sixteen. The biological machine did work well, though at the risk of her life. It made her into a vital, robust young person, without changing her mind at all. This is hard for any actress to portray. The storyboxes have the advantage. They can show the machine with all sorts of improvements — flashing lights, bits of lightnight, mysterious rays. Actually, it looked like a bathtub full of boiling brown jelly, completely covering Joan.

Elaine, meanwhile, ate hungrily in the palatial room of Englok himself. The food was very, very old, and she had doubts, as a witch, about its nutritional value, but it stilled her hunger. The denizens of Clown Town had declared this room "off limits" to themselves, for reasons which Charley-is-my-darling could not make plain. He stood in the doorway and told her what to do to find food, to activate the bed out of the floor, to open the bathroom. Everything was very old-fashioned and nothing responded to a simple thought or to a mere slap.

A curious thing happened.

Elaine had washed her hands, had eaten and was preparing for her bath. She had taken most of her clothes off, thinking only that Charley-is-my-darling was an animal, not a man, so that it did not matter.

Suddenly she knew it did matter.

He might be an underperson but he was a man to her. Blushing deeply all the way down to her neck, she ran into the bath-

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room and called back to him:

"Go away. I will bathe and then sleep. Wake me when you have to, not before."

"Yes, Elaine."

"And — and — "

"Yes?"

"Thank you," she said. "Thank you very much. Do you know, I never said 'thank you' to an underperson before."

"That's all right," said Charley-is-my-darling with a smile. "Most real people don't. Sleep well, my dear Elaine. When you awaken, be ready for great things. We shall take a star out of the skies and shall sets thousands of worlds on fire . . ."

"What's that?" she said, putting her head around the corner of the bathroom.

"Just a figure of speech," he smiled. "Just meaning that you won't have much time. Rest well. Don't forget to put your clothes in the ladysmaid machine. The ones in Clown Town are all worn out. But since we haven't used this room, yours ought to work."

"Which is it?" she said.

"The red lid with the gold handle. Just lift it." On that domestic note he left her to rest, while he went off and plotted the destiny of a hundred billion lives.

They told her it was mid-morning when she came out of the room of Englok. How could she have known it? The brown-and-yellow corridor, with its gloomy old yellow lights, was just as dim and stench-ridden as ever.

The people all seemed to have changed.

Baby-baby was no longer a mouse-hag, but a woman of considerable force and much tenderness. Crawlie was as dangerous as a human enemy, staring at Elaine, her beautiful face gone bland with hidden hate. Charley-is-my-darling was gay, friendly and persuasive. She thought she could read expressions on the faces of Orson and the S'woman, odd though their features were.

After she had gotten through some singularly polite greetings, she demanded, "What's happening now?"

A new voice spoke up — a voice she knew and did not know.

Elaine glanced over at a niche in the wall.

The Lady Panc Ashash! And who was that with her?

Even as she asked herself the question, Elaine knew the answer. It was Joan, grown, only half a head less tall than the Lady Panc Ashash or herself. It was a new Joan, powerful, happy, and quiet; but it was all the dear little old D'joan too.

"Welcome," said the lady Panc Ashash, "to our revolution."

"What's a revolution?" asked Elaine. "And I thought you

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couldn't come in here with all the thought shielding?"

The Lady Panc Ashash lifted a wire which trailed back from her robot body, "I rigged this up so that I could use the body. Precautions are no use any more. It's the other side which will need the precautions now. A revolution is a way of changing systems and people. This is one. You go first, Elaine. This way."

"To die? Is that what you mean?"

The lady Panc Ashash laughed warmly. "You know me by now. You know my friends here. You know what your own life has been down to now, a useless witch in a world which did not want you. We may die, but it's what we do before we die that counts. This is Joan going to meet her destiny. You lead as far as the Upper City. Then Joan will lead. And then we shall see."

"You mean, all these people are going too?" Joan looked at the ranks of the underpeople, who were beginning to form into two queues down the corridor. The queues bulged wherever mothers led their children by the hand or carried small ones in their arms. Here and there the line was punctuated by a giant underperson.

They have been nothing, thought Elaine, and I was nothing too. Now we are all going to do something, even though we may be terminated for it. "May be" thought she: "shall be" is the word. But it is worth it if Joan can change the worlds, even a little bit, even for other people.

Joan spoke up. Her voice had grown with her body, but it was the same dear voice which the little dog-girl had had sixteen hours (they seem sixteen years, thought Elaine) ago, when Elaine first met her at the door to the tunnel of Englok.

Joan said, "Love is not something special, reserved for men alone.

"Love is not proud. Love has no real name. Love is for life itself, and we have life.

"We cannot win by fighting. People outnumber us, outgun us, outrun us, outfight us. But people did not create us. Whatever made people, made us too. You all know that, but will we say the name?"

There was a murmur of *no* and *never* from the crowd.

"You have waited for me. I have waited too. It is time to die, perhaps, but we will die the way people did in the beginning, before things became easy and cruel for them. They live in a stupor and they die in a dream. It is not a good dream and if they awaken, they will know that we

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are people too. Are you with me?" They murmured yes. "Do you love me?" Again they murmured agreement. "Shall we go out and meet the day?" They shouted their acclaim.

Joan turned to the Lady Panc Ashash. "Is everything as you wished and ordered?"

"Yes," said the dear dead woman in the robot body. "Joan first, to lead you. Elaine preceding her, to drive away robots or ordinary underpeople. When you meet real people, you will love them. That is all. You will love them. If they kill you, you will love them. Joan will show you how. Pay no further attention to me. Ready?"

Joan lifted her right hand and said words to herself. The people bowed their heads before her, faces and muzzles and snouts of all sizes and colors. A baby of some kind mewed in a tiny falsetto to the rear.

Just before she turned to lead the procession, Joan turned back to the people and said, "Crawlie, where are you?"

"Here, in the middle," said a clear, calm voice far back.

"Do you love me now, Crawlie?"

"No, D'joan. I like you less than when you were a little dog. But these are my people too, as well as yours. I am brave. I can walk. I won't make trouble."

"Crawlie," said Joan, "will you love people if we meet them?"

All faces turned toward the beautiful bison-girl. Elaine could just see her, way down the murky corridor. Elaine could see that the girl's face had turned utter, dead white with emotion. Whether rage or fear, she could not tell.

At last Crawlie spoke, "No, I won't love people. And I won't love you. I have my pride."

Softly, softly, like death itself at a quiet bedside, Joan spoke. "You *can* stay behind, Crawlie. You can stay here. It isn't much of a chance, but it's a chance."

Crawlie looked at her, "Bad luck to you, dog-woman, and bad luck to the rotten human being up there beside you."

Elaine stood on tiptoe to see what would happen. Crawlie's face suddenly disappeared, dropping downward.

The snake woman elbowed her way to the front, stood close to Joan where the others could see her, and sang out in a voice as clear as metal itself:

"Sing 'poor, poor, Crawlie,' dear people. Sing 'I love Crawlie,' dear people. She is dead. I just killed her so that we would all be full of love. I love you too," said the S'woman, on whose reptilian features no sign of love or hate could be seen.

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Joan spoke up, apparently prompted by the lady Panc Ashash. "We do love Crawlie, dear people. Think of her and then let us move forward."

Charley-is - my - darling gave Elaine a little shove. "Here, you lead."

In a dream, in a bewilderment, Elaine led.

She felt warm, happy, brave when she passed close to the strange Joan, so tall and yet so familiar. Joan gave her a full smile and whispered, "Tell me I'm doing well, human woman. I'm a dog and dogs have lived a million years for the praise of man."

"You're right, Joan, you're completely right! I'm with you. Shall I go now?" responded Elaine.

Joan nodded, her eyes brimming with tears.

Elaine led.

Joan and the Lady Panc Ashash followed, dog and dead woman championing the procession.

The rest of the underpeople followed them in turn, in a double line.

When they made the secret door open, daylight flooded the corridor. Elaine could almost feel the stale odor-ridden air pouring out with them. When she glanced back into the tunnel for the last time, she saw the body of Crawlie lying all alone on the floor.

Elaine herself turned to the steps and began going up them.

No one had yet noticed the procession.

Elaine could hear the wire of the Lady Panc Ashash dragging on the stone and metal of the steps as they climbed.

When she reached the top door, Elaine had a moment of indecision and panic. "This is my life, my life," she thought. "I have no other. What have I done? Oh, Hunter, Hunter, where are you? Have you betrayed me?"

Said Joan softly behind her, "Go on! Go on. This is a war of love. Keep going."

Elaine opened the door to the upper street. The roadway was full of people. Three police ornithopters flapped slowly overhead. This was an unusual number. Elaine stopped again.

"Keep walking," said Joan, "and warn the robots off."

Elaine advanced and the revolution began.

VIII

The revolution lasted six minutes and covered one hundred and twelve meters.

The police flew over as soon as the underpeople began pouring out of the doorway.

The first one glided in like a big bird, his voice asking, "Identify! Who are you?"

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Elaine said, "Go away. That is a command."

"Identify yourself," said the bird-like machine, banking steeply with the lens-eyed robot peering at Elaine out of its middle.

"Go away," said Elaine. "I am a true human and I command."

The first police ornithopter apparently called to the others by radio. Together they flapped their way down the corridor between the big buildings.

A lot of people had stopped. Most of their faces were blank, a few showing animation or amusement or horror at the sight of so many underpeople all crowded in one place.

Joan's voice sang out, in the clearest possible enunciation of the Old Common Tongue:

"Dear people, we are people. We love you. We love you."

The underpeople began to chant *love, love, love* in a weird plainsong full of sharps and halftones. The true humans shrank back. Joan herself set the example by embracing a young woman of about her own height. Charley-is-my-darling took a human man by the shoulders and shouted at him:

"I love you, my dear fellow! Believe me, I do love you. It's wonderful meeting you." The human man was startled by the contact and even more startled by the glowing warmth of the goat-man's voice. He stood mouth slack and body relaxed with sheer, utter and accepted surprise.

Somewhere to the rear a person screamed.

A police ornithopter came flapping back. Elaine could not tell if it was one of the three she had sent away, or a new one altogether. She waited for it to get close enough to hail, so that she could tell it to go away. For the first time, she wondered about the actual physical character of danger. Could the police machine put a slug through her? Or shoot flame at her? Or lift her screaming, carrying her away with its iron claws to some place where she would be pretty and clean and never herself again? "Oh, Hunter, Hunter, where are you now? Have you forgotten me? Have you betrayed me?"

The underpeople were still surging forward and mingling with with the real people, clutching them by their hands or their garments and repeating in the queer medley of voices:

"I love you. Oh, please, I love you! We are people. We are your sisters and brothers . . . "

The snake-woman wasn't making much progress. She had seized a human man with her more-than-iron hand. Elaine hadn't seen her saying anything, but the man had fainted dead away. The

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snake woman had him draped over her arm like an empty overcoat and was looking for somebody else to love.

Behind Elaine a low voice said, "He's coming soon."

"Who?" said Elaine to the Lady Panc Ashash, knowing perfectly well whom she meant, but not wanting to admit it, and busy with watching the circling ornithopter at the same time.

"The Hunter, of course," said the robot with the dear dead lady's voice. "He'll come for you. You'll be all right. I'm at the end of my wire. Look away, my dear. They are about to kill me again and I am afraid that the sight would distress you."

Fourteen robots, foot models, marched with military decision into the crowd. The true humans took heart from this and some of them began to slip away into doorways. Most of the real people were still so surprised that they stood around with the underpeople pawing at them, babbling the accents of love over and over again, the animal origin of their voices showing plainly.

The robot sergeant took no note of this. He approached the Lady Panc Ashash only to find Elaine standing in his way.

"I command you," she said, with all the passion of a working witch, "I *command* you to leave this place."

His eye-lenses were like dark-blue marbles floating in milk. They seemed swimmy and poorly-focused as he looked her over. He did not reply but stepped around her, faster than her own body could intercept him. He made for the dear, dead Lady Panc Ashash.

Elaine, bewildered, realized that the Lady's robot body seemed more human than ever. The robot-sergeant confronted her.

This is the scene which we all remember, the first authentic picture tape of the entire incident:

The gold and black sergeant, his milky eyes staring at the Lady Panc Ashash.

The Lady herself, in the pleasant old robot body, lifting a commanding hand.

Elaine, distraught, half-turning as though she would grab the robot by his right arm. Her head is moving so rapidly that her black hair swings as she turns.

Charley-is-my-darling shouting, "I love, love, love!" at a small handsome man with mouse-colored hair. The man is gulping and saying nothing.

All this we know.

Then comes the unbelievable, which we now believe, the event for which the stars and skylanes were unprepared.

Mutiny.

Robot mutiny.

Disobedience in open daylight.

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The words are hard to hear on the tape, but we can still make them out. The recording device on the police ornithopter had gotten a square fix on the face of the Lady Panc Ashash. Lip-readers can see the words plainly; non-lip-readers can hear the words the third or fourth time the tape is run through the eyebox.

Said the Lady, "Overridden."

Said the sergeant, "No, you're a robot."

"See for yourself. Read my brain. I am a robot. I am also a woman. You cannot disobey people. I am people. I love you. Furthermore, you are people. You think. We love each other. Try. Try to attack."

"I — I cannot," said the robot sergeant, his milky eyes seeming to spin with excitement. "You love me? You mean I'm *alive? I exist?*"

"With love, you do," said the Lady Panc Ashash. "Look at her," said the Lady, pointing to Joan, "because she has brought you love."

The robot looked and disobeyed the law. His squad looked with him.

He turned back to the Lady and bowed to her: "Then you know what we must do, if we cannot obey you and cannot disobey the others."

"Do it," she said sadly, "but know what you are doing. You are not really escaping two human commands. You are making a choice. You. That makes you men."

The sergeant turned to his squad of man-sized robots: "You hear that? She says we are men. I believe her. Do you believe her?"

"We do," they cried almost unanimously.

This is where the picture-tape ends, but we can imagine how the scene was concluded. Elaine had stopped short, just behind the sergeant-robot. The other robots had come up behind her. Charley-is-my-darling had stopped talking. Joan was in the act of lifting her hands in blessing, her warm brown dog eyes gone wide with pity and understanding.

People wrote down the things that we cannot see.

Apparently the robot-sergeant said, "Our love, dear people, and good-by. We disobey and die." He waved his hand to Joan. It is not certain whether he did or did not say, "Good-by, our lady and our liberator." Maybe some poet made up the second saying; the first one, we are sure about. And we are sure about the next word, the one which historians and poets all agree on. He turned to his men and said,

"Destruct."

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Fourteen robots, the black-and-gold sergeant and his thirteen silver-blue foot soldiers, suddenly spurted white fire in the street of Kalma. They detonated their suicide buttons, thermite caps in their own heads. They had done something with no human command at all, on an order from another robot, the body of the Lady Panc Ashash, and she in turn had no human authority, but merely the word of the little dog-girl Joan, who had been made an adult in a single night.

Fourteen white flames made people and underpeople turn their eyes aside. Into the light there dropped a special police ornithopter. Out of it came the two Ladies, Arabella Underwood and Goroke. They lifted their forearms to shield their eyes from the blazing dying robots. They did not see the Hunter, who had moved mysteriously into an open window above the street and who watched the scene by putting his hands over his eyes and peeking through the slits between his fingers. While the people still stood blinded, they felt the fierce telepathic shock of the mind of the Lady Goroke taking command of the situation. That was her right, as a Chief of the Instrumentality. Some of the people, but not all of them, felt the outre counter-

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shock of Joan's mind reaching out to meet the Lady Goroke.

"I command," thought the Lady Goroke, her mind kept open to all beings.

"Indeed you do, but I love, I love you," thought Joan.

The first-order forces met.

They engaged.

The revolution was over. Nothing had really happened, but Joan had forced people to meet her. This was nothing like the poem about people and underpeople getting all mixed up. The mixup came much later, even after the time of C'mell. The poem is pretty, but is it dead wrong, as you can see for yourself:

You should ask me,
  Me, me, me,
Because I know —
I used to live
  On the Eastern Shore.
Men aren't men,
And women aren't women,
And people aren't people any more.

There is no Eastern Shore on Fomalhaut III anyhow; the people/underpeople crisis came much later than this. The revolution had failed, but history had reached its new turning-point, the quarrel of the two Ladies. They left their minds open out of sheer surprise. Suicidal robots and world-loving dogs were unheard-of. It was bad enough to have illegal underpeople on the prowl, but these new things — ah!

Destroy them all, said the Lady Goroke.

"Why?" thought the Lady Arabella Underwood.

Malfunction, replied Goroke.

"But they're not machines!"

Then they're animals — underpeople. Destroy! Destroy!

Then came the answer which has created our own time. It came from the Lady Arabella Underwood, and all Kalma heard it:

Perhaps they are people. They must have a trial.

The dog-girl Joan dropped to her knees. "I have succeeded, I have succeeded, I have succeeded! You can kill me, dear people, but I love, love, love you!"

The Lady Panc Ashash said quietly to Elaine, "I thought I would be dead by now. Really dead, at last. But I am not. I have seen the worlds turn, Elaine, and you have seen them turn with me."

The underpeople had fallen quiet as they heard the high-volume telepathic exchange between the two great Ladies.

The real soldiers dropped out of the sky, their ornithopters whistling as they hawked down to the ground. They ran up to the underpeople and began binding them with cord.

One soldier took a single look at the robot body of the Lady

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Panc Ashash. He touched it with his staff, and the staff turned cherry-red with heat. The robot-body, its head suddenly drained, fell to the ground in a heap of icy crystals.

Elaine walked between the frigid rubbish and the red-hot staff. She had seen Hunter.

She missed seeing the soldier who came up to Joan started to bind her and then fell back weeping, babbling, "She loves me! She loves me!"

The Lord Femtiosex, who commanded the inflying soldiers, bound Joan with cord despite her talking.

Grimly he answered her: "Of course you love me. You're a good dog. You'll die soon, doggy, but till then, you'll obey."

"I'm obeying," said Joan, "but I'm a dog *and* a person. Open your mind, man, and you'll feel it."

Apparently he did open his mind and felt the ocean of love riptiding into him. It shocked him. His arm swung up and back, the edge of the hand striking at Joan's neck for the ancient kill.

"No, you don't," thought the Lady Arabella Underwood. "That child is going to get a proper trial."

He looked at her and glared, Chief doesn't strike Chief, my Lady. Let go my arm.

Thought the Lady Arabella at him, openly and in public: "A trial, then."

In his anger he nodded at her. He would not think or speak to her in the presence of all the other people.

A soldier brought Elaine and Hunter before him.

"Sir and master, these are people, not underpeople. But they have dog-thoughts, cat-thoughts, goat-thoughts and robot-ideas in their heads. Do you wish to look?"

"Why look?" said the Lord Femtiosex, who was as blonde as the ancient pictures of Baldur, and oftentimes that arrogant as well. "The Lord Limaono is arriving. That's all of us. We can have the trial here and now."

Elaine felt cords bite into her wrists; she heard the Hunter murmur comforting words to her, words which she did not quite understand.

"They will not kill us," he murmured, "though we will wish they had, before this day is out. Everything is happening as she said it would, and —"

"Who is that she?" interrupted Elaine.

"She? The lady, of course. The dear dead Lady Panc Ashash, who has worked wonders after her own death, merely with the print of her personality on the machine. Who do you think told me what to do? Why did we wait

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for you to condition Joan to greatness? Why did the people way down in Clown Town keep on raising one D'joan after another, hoping that hope and a great wonder would occur?"

"You knew?" said Elaine. "You knew . . . before it happened?"

"Of course," said the Hunter, "not exactly, but more or less. She had had hundreds of years after death inside that computer. She had time for billions of thoughts. She saw how it would be if it had to be, and I —"

"Shut up, you people!" roared the Lord Femtiosex. "You are making the animals restless with your babble. Shut up, or I will stun you!"

Elaine fell silent.

The Lord Femtiosex glanced around at her, ashamed at having made his anger naked before another person. He added quietly:

"The trial is about to begin. The one that the tall Lady ordered."

IX

You all know about the trial, so there is no need to linger over it. There is another picture of San Shigonanda, the one from his conventional period, which shows it very plainly.

The street had filled full of real people, crowding together to see something which would ease the boredom of perfection and time. They all had numbers or number-codes instead of names. They were handsome, well, dully happy. They even looked a great deal alike, similar in their handsomeness, their health and their underlying boredom. All of them had a total of four hundred years to live. None of them knew real war, even though the extreme readiness of the soldiers showed vain practice of hundreds of years. The people were beautiful, but they felt themselves useless, and they were quietly desperate without knowing it themselves. This is all clear from the painting, and from the wonderful way that San Shigonanda has of forming them in informal ranks and letting the calm blue light of day shine down on their handsome, hopeless features.

With the underpeople, the artist performs real wonders.

Joan herself is bathed in light. Her light brown hair and her doggy brown eyes express softness and tenderness. He even conveys the idea that her new body is terribly new and strong, that she is virginal and ready to die, that she is a mere girl and yet completely fearless. The posture of love shows in her legs: she stands lightly. Love shows in her hands: they are turned outward toward the judges. Love

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shows in her smile: it is confident.

And the judges!

The artist has them, too. The Lord Femtiosex, calm again, his narrow sharp lips expressing perpetual rage against a universe which has grown too small for him. The Lord Limaono, wise, twice-reborn, sluggardly, but alert as a snake behind the sleepy eyes and the slow smile. The Lady Arabella Underwood, the tallest true-human present, with her Norstrilian pride and the arrogance of great wealth, along with the capricious tenderness of great wealth, showing in the way that she sat, judging her fellow-judges instead of the prisoners. The Lady Goroke, bewildered at last, frowning at a play of fortune which she does not understand. The artist has it all.

And you have the real view-tapes, too, if you want to go to a museum. The reality is not as dramatic as the famous painting, but it has value of its own. The voice of Joan, dead these many centuries, is still strangely moving. It is the voice of a dog-carved-into-man, but it is also the voice of a great lady. The image of the Lady Panc Ashash must have taught her that, along with what she had learned from Elaine and Hunter in the antechamber above the Brown and Yellow Corridor of Englok.

The words of the trial, they too have survived. Many of them have became famous, all across the worlds.

Joan said, during inquiry, "But it is the duty of life to find more than life, and to exchange itself for that higher goodness."

Joan commented, upon sentence. "My body is your property, but my love is not. My love is my own, and I shall love you fiercely while you kill me."

When the soldiers had killed Charley-is-my-darling and were trying to hack off the head of the S'woman until one of them thought to freeze her into crystals, Joan said:

"Should we be strange to you, we animals of earth that you have brought to the stars? We shared the same sun, the same oceans, the same sky. We are all from Manhome. How do you know that we would not have caught up with you if we had all stayed at home together? My people were dogs. They loved you before you made a woman-shaped thing out of my mother. Should I not love you still? The miracle is not that you have made people out of us. The miracle is that it took us so long to understand it. We are people now, and so are you. You will be sorry for what you are going to do to me, but remember that I shall love your sorrow, too, be-

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cause great and good things will come out of it."

The Lord Limaono slyly asked, "What is a 'miracle'?"

And her words were, "There is knowledge from Earth which you have not yet found again. There is the name of the Nameless one. There are secrets hidden in time from you. Only the dead and the unborn can know them right now: I am both."

The scene is familiar, and yet we will never understand it.

We know what the lords Femtiosex and Limaono thought they were doing. They were maintaining established order and they were putting it on tape. The minds of men can live together only if the basic ideas are communicated. Nobody has, even now, found out a way to recording telepathy directly into an instrument. We get pieces and snatches and wild jumbles, but we never get a satisfactory record of what one of the great ones was trasmitting to another. The two male chiefs were trying to put on record all those things about the episode which would teach careless people not to play with the lives of the underpeople. They were even trying to make underpeople understand the rules and designs by virtue of which they had been transformed from animals into the highest servants of man. This would have been hard to do, given the bewildering events of the last few hours, even from one Chief of the Instrumentality to another; for the general public, it was almost impossible. The outpouring from the Brown and Yellow Corridor was wholly unexpected, even though the Lady Goroke had surprised D'joan; the mutiny of the robot police posed problems which would have to be discussed halfway across the galaxy. Furthermore, the dog-girl was making points which had some verbal validity. If they were left in the form of mere words without proper context, they might affect heedless or impressionable minds. A bad idea can spread like a mutated germ. If it is at all interesting, it can leap from one mind to another halfway across the universe before it has a stop put to it. Look at the ruinous fads and foolish fashions which have nuisanced mankind even in the ages of the highest orderliness. We today know that variety, flexibility, danger and the seasoning of a little hate can make love and life bloom as they never bloomed before; we know it is better to live with the complications of thirteen thousand old languages resurrected from the dead ancient past than it is to live with the cold blind-alley

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perfection of the Old Common Tongue. We know a lot of things which the Lords Femtiosex and Limaono did not, and before we consider them stupid or cruel, we must remember that centuries passed before mankind finally came to grips with the problem of the underpeople and decided what "life" was within the limits of the human community.

Finally, we have the testimony of the two Lords themselves. They both lived to very advanced ages, and toward the end of their lives they were worried and annoyed to find that the episode of D'joan overshadowed all the bad things which had not happened during their long careers — bad things which had labored to forestall for the protection of the planet Fomalhaut III — and they were distressed to see themselves portrayed as casual, cruel men when in fact they were nothing of the sort. If they had seen that the story of Joan on Fomalhaut III would get to be what it is today — one of the great romances of mankind, along with the story of C'mell or the romance of the lady who sailed *The Soul* — they would not only have been disappointed, but they would have been justifiably angry at the fickleness of mankind as well. Their roles are clear, because they made them clear. The Lord Femtiosex accepts the responsibility for the notion of fire; the Lord Limaono agrees that he concurred in the decision. Both of them, many years later, reviewed the tapes of the scene and agreed that something which the Lady Arabella Underwood had said or thought —

Something had made them do it.

But even with the tapes to refresh and clarify their memories, they could not say what.

We have even put computers on the job of cataloguing every word and every inflection of the whole trial, but they have not pinpointed the critical point either.

And the Lady Arabella — nobody ever questioned her. They didn't dare. She went back to her own planet of Old North Australia, surrounded by the immense treasure of the santaclara drug, and no planet is going to pay at the rate of two thousand million credits a day for the privilege of sending an investigator to talk to a lot of obstinate, simple, wealthy Norstrilian peasants who will not talk to offworlders anyhow. The Norstrilians charge that sum for the admission of any guest not selected by their own initiative so we will their own invitation; so we will never know what the lady Arabella Underwood said or did af-

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ter she went home. The Norstrilians said they did not wish to discuss the matter, and if we do not wish to go back to living a mere seventy years we had better not anger the only planet which produces stroon.

And the Lady Goroko — she, poor thing, went mad.

People did not know it till later, but there was no word to be gotten out of her. She performed the odd actions which we now know to be a part of the dynasty of Lords Jestocost, who forced themselves by diligence and merit upon the Instrumentality for two hundred and more years. But on the case of Joan she had nothing to say.

The trial is therefore a scene about which we know everything — and nothing.

We think that we know the physical facts of the life of D'joan who became Joan. We know about the Lady Panc Ashash who whispered endlessly to the underpeople about a justice yet to come. We know the whole life of the unfortunate Elaine and of her involvement with the case. We know that there were in those centuries, when underpeople first developed, many warrens in which illegal underpeople used their near-human wits, their animal cunning and their gift of speech to survive even when mankind had declared them surplus. The Brown and Yellow Corridor was not by any means the only one of its kind. We even know what happened to the Hunter.

For the other underpeople — Charley-is-my-darling, Baby-baby, Mabel, the S'woman, Orson and all the others — we have the tapes of the trial itself. They were not tried by anybody. They were put to death by the soldiers on the spot, as soon as it was plain that their testimony would not be needed. As witnesses, they could live a few minutes or an hour; as animals, they were already outside the regulations.

Ah, we know all about that now, and yet know nothing. Dying is simple, though we tend to hide it away. The *how* of dying is a minor scientific matter; the when of dying is a problem to each of us, whether he lives on the old-fashioned 400-year-life planets or on the radical new ones where the freedoms of disease and accident have been reintroduced; the *why* of it is still as shocking to us as it was to pre-atomic man, who used to cover farmland with the boxed bodies of his dead. These underpeople died as no animals had ever died before. Joyfully.

One mother held her children up for the soldier to kill them all.

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She must have been of rat origin, because she had septuplets in closely matching form.

The tape shows us the picture of the soldier getting ready.

The rat-woman greets him with a smile and holds up her seven babies. Little blondes they are, wearing pink or blue bonnets, all of them with glowing cheeks and bright little blue eyes.

"Put them on the ground," said the soldier. "I'm going to kill you and them too." On the tape, we can hear the nervous peremptory edge of his voice. He added one word, as though he had already begun to think that he had to justify himself to these underpeople. "Orders," he added.

"It doesn't matter if I hold them, soldier. I'm their mother. They'll feel better if they die easily with their mother near. I love you, soldier. I love all people. You are my brother, even though my blood is rat blood and yours is human. Go ahead and kill them soldier. I can't even hurt you. Can't you understand it? *I love you, soldier.* We share a common speech, common hopes, common fears, and a common death. That is what Joan has taught us all. Death is not bad, soldier. It just comes badly, sometimes, but you will remember me after you have killed me and my babies. You will remember that I love you now —"

The soldier, we see on the tape, can stand it no longer. He clubs his weapon, knocks the woman down; the babies scatter on the ground. We see his booted heel rise up and crush down against their heads. We hear the wet popping sound of the little heads breaking, the sharp cut-off of the baby wails as they die. We get one last view of the rat-woman herself. She had stood up again by the time the seventh baby is killed. She offers her hand to the soldier to shake. Her face is dirty and bruised, a trickle of blood running down her left cheek. Even now, we know she is a rat, an underperson, a modified animal, a nothing. And yet we, even we across the centuries, feel that she had somehow become more of a person than we are — that she dies human and fulfilled. We know that she has triumphed over death: we have not.

We see the soldier looking straight at her with eerie horror, as though her simple love, were some unfathomable device from an alien source.

We hear her next words on the tape:

"Soldier, I love all of you —"

His weapon could have killed her in a fraction of a second, if he had used it properly. But he didn't. He clubbed it and hit her, as though his heat-remover had

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been a wooden club and himself a wild man instead of part of the elite guard of Kalma.

We know what happens then.

She falls under his blows. She points. Points straight at Joan, wrapped in fire and smoke.

The rat-woman screams one last time, screams into the lens of the robot camera as though she were talking not to the soldier but to all mankind:

"You can't kill *her*. You can't kill love. I love you, soldier, love you. You can't kill *that*. Remember —"

His last blow catches her in the face.

She falls back on the pavement. He thrusts his foot, as we can see by the tape, directly on her throat. He leaps forward in an odd little jig, bringing his full weight down on her fragile neck. He swings while stamping downward, and we then see his face, full on in the camera.

It is the face of a weeping child, bewildered by hurt and shocked by the prospect of more hurt to come.

He had started to do his duty, and duty had gone wrong, all wrong.

Poor man. He must have been one of the first men in the new worlds who tried to use weapons against love. Love is a sour and powerful ingredient to meet in the excitement of battle.

All the underpeople died that way. Most of them died smiling, saying the word "love" or the name "Joan."

The bear-man Orson had been kept to the very end.

He died very oddly. He died laughing.

The soldier lifted his pellet-thrower and aimed it straight at Orson's forehead. The pellets were 22 millimeters in diameter and had a muzzle velocity of only 125 meters per second. In that manner, they could stop recalcitrant robots or evil underpeople, without any risk of penetrating buildings and hurting the true people who might be inside, out of sight.

Orson looks, on the tape the robots made, as though he knows perfectly well what the weapon is. (He probably did. Underpeople used to live with the danger of a violent death hanging over them from birth until removal.) He shows no fear of it. in the pictures we have; he begins to laugh. His laughter is warm, generous, relaxed — like the friendly laughter of a happy foster-father who has found a guilty and embarrassed child, knowing full well that the child expects punishment but will not get it.

"Shoot, man. You can't kill me, man. I'm in your mind. I love you. Joan taught us. Listen

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man. There is no death. Not for love. Ho, ho, ho, poor fellow, don't be afraid of me. Shoot! You're the unlucky one. You're going to live. And remember. And remember. And remember. I've made you human, fellow."

The soldier croaks, "What did you say?"

"I'm saving you, man. I'm turning you into a real human being. With the power of Joan. The power of love. Poor guy! go ahead and shoot me if it makes you uncomfortable to wait. You'll do it anyhow."

This time we do not see the soldier's face, but the tightness of his back and neck betray his own internal stress.

We see the big broad bear face blossom forth in an immense splash of red as the soft heavy pellet plow into it.

Then the camera turns to something else.

A little boy, probably a fox, but very finished in his human shape.

He was bigger than a baby, but not big enough, like the larger underchildren, to have understood the deathless importance of Joan's teaching.

He was the only one of the group who behaved like an ordinary underperson. He broke and ran.

He was clever: He ran among the spectators, so that the soldier could not use pellets or heat-reducers on him without hurting an actual human being. He ran and jumped and dodged, fighting passively but desperately for his life.

At last one of the spectators — a tall man with a silver hat — tripped him up. The fox-boy fell to the pavement, skinning his palms and knees. Just as he looked up to see who might be coming at him, a bullet caught him neatly in the head. He fell a little way forward, dead.

People die. We know how they die. We have seen them die shy and quiet in the Dying Houses. We have seen others go into the 400-year-rooms, which have no door-knobs and no cameras on the inside. We have seen pictures of many dying in natural disasters, where the robot crews took picture-tapes for the record and the investigation later on. Death is not uncommon, and it is very unpleasant.

But this time, death itself was different. All the fear of death — except for the one little fox-boy, too young to understand and too old to wait for death in his mother's arms — had gone out of the underpeople. They met death willingly, with love and calmness in their bodies, their voices, their demeanor. It did not matter whether they lived long enough to know what happened

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to Joan herself: they had perfect confidence in her, anyway.

This indeed was the new weapon, love and the good death.

Crawlie, with her pride, had missed it all.

The investigators later found the body of Crawlie in the corridor. It was possible to reconstruct who she had been and what had happened to her. The computer in which the bodiless image of the Lady Panc Ashash survived for a few days after the trial was, of course, found and disassembled. Nobody thought at the time to get her opinions and last words. A lot of historians have gnashed their teeth over that.

The details are therefore clear. The archives even preserve the long interrogation and responses concerning Elaine, when she was processed and made clear after the trial. But we do not know how the idea of "fire" came in.

Somewhere, beyond sight of the tape-scanner, the word must have been passed between the four Chiefs of the Instrumentality who were conducting the trial. There is the protest of the Head of Birds (Robot), or police chief of Kalma, a Subchief named Fisi.

The records show his appearance. He comes in at the right side of the scene, bows respectfully to the four Chiefs and lifts his right hand in the traditional sign for "beg to interrupt," an odd twist of the elevated hand which the actors have found it very difficult to copy when they tried to put the whole story of Joan and Elaine into a single drama. (In fact, he had no more idea that future ages would be studying his casual appearance than did the others. The whole episode was characterized by haste and precipitateness, in the light of what we now know.) The Lord Limaono says:

"Interruption refused. We are making a decision."

The Chief of Birds spoke up anyhow.

"My words are for your decision, my Lords and my Ladies."

"Say it, then," commanded the Lady Goroke, "but be brief."

"Shut down the viewers. Destroy that animal. Brainwash the spectators. Get amnesia yourselves, for this one hour. This whole scene is dangerous. I am nothing but a supervisor of ornithopters, keeping perfect order, but I—"

"We have heard enough," said the Lord Femtiosex. "You manage your birds and we'll run the worlds. How do you dare to think 'like a Chief'? We have responsibilities which you can't even guess at. Stand back."

Fisi, in the pictures, stands back, his face sullen. In that par-

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ticular frame of scenes, one can see some of the spectators going away. It was time for lunch and they had become hungry; they had no idea that they were going to miss the greatest atrocity in history, about which a thousand and more grand operas would be written.

Femtiosex then moved to the climax. "More knowledge, not less, is the answer to this problem. I have heard about something which is not as bad as the Planet Shayol, but which can do just as well for an exhibit on a civilized world. You there," said he to Fisi, the Chief of Birds, "bring oil and a spray. Immediately."

Joan looked at him with compassion and longing, but she said nothing. She suspected what he was going to do. As a girl, as a dog, she hated it; as a revolutionary, she welcomed it as the consummation of her mission.

The Lord Femtiosex lifted his right hand. He curled the ring finger and the little finger, putting his thumb over them. That left the first two fingers extended straight out. At that time, the sign from one Chief to another, meaning, "private channels, telepathic, immediate." It has since been adopted by underpeople as their emblem for political unity.

The four Chiefs went into a tracelike state and shared the judgment.

Joan began to sing in a soft, protesting, dog-like wail, using the off-key plainsong which the underpeople had sung just before their hour of decision when they left the Brown and Yellow Corridor. Her words were nothing special, repetitions of the "people, dear people, I love you" which she had been communicating ever since she came to the surface of Kalma. But the way she did it has defied imitation across the centuries. There are thousands of lyrics and melodies which call themselves, one way and another, *The Song of Joan,* but none of them come near to the heart-wrenching pathos of the original tapes. The singing, like her own personality, was unique.

The appeal was deep. Even the real people tried to listen, shifting their eyes from the four immobile Chiefs of the Instrumentality to the brown-eyed singing girl. Some of them just could not stand it. In true human fashion, they forgot why they were there and went absent-mindly home to lunch.

Suddenly Joan stopped.

Her voice ringing clearly across the crowd, she cried out:

"The end is near, dear people. The end is near."

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Eyes all shifted to the two Lords and the two Ladies of the Instrumentality. The Lady Arabella Underwood looked grim after the telepathic conference. The Lady Goroke was haggard with wordless grief. The two Lords looked severe and resolved.

It was the Lord Femtiosex who spoke.

"We have tried you, animal. Your offense is great. You have lived illegally. For that the penalty is death. You have interfered with robots in some manner which we do not understand. For that brand-new crime, the penalty should be more than death; and I have recommended a punishment which was applied on a planet of the Violet Star. You have also said many unlawful and improper things, detracting from the happiness and security of mankind. For that the penalty is reeducation, but since you have two death sentences already, this does not matter. Do you have anything to say before I pronounce sentence?"

"If you light a fire today, my lord, it will never be put out in the hearts of men. You can destroy me. You can reject my love. You cannot destroy the goodness in yourselves, no matter how much goodness may anger you —"

"Shut up!" he roared. "I asked for a plea, not a speech. You will die by fire, here and now. What do you say to that?"

"I love you, dear people."

Femtiosex nodded to the men of the Chief of Birds, who had dragged a barrel and a spray into the street in front of Joan.

"Tie her to that post," he commanded. "Spray her. Light her. Are the tape-makers in focus? We want this to be recorded and known. If the underpeople try this again, they will see that mankind controls the worlds." He looked at Joan and his eyes seemed to go out of focus. In an unaccustomed voice he said, "I am not a bad man, little dog-girl, but you are a bad animal and we must make an example of you. Do you understand that?"

"Femtiosex," she cried, leaving out his title, "I am very sorry for you. I love you too."

With these words of hers, his face became clouded and angry again. He brought his right hand down in a chopping gesture.

Fisi copied the gesture and the men operating the barrel and spray began to squirt a hissing stream of oil on Joan. Two guards had already chained her to the lamp post, using an improvised chain of handcuffs to make sure that she stood upright and remained in plain sight of the crowd.

"Fire," said Femtiosex.

Elaine felt the Hunter's body,

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beside her, cramp sharply. He seemed to strain intensely. For herself, she felt the way she had felt when she was defrozen and taken out of the adiabatic pod in which she had made the trip from earth — sick to her stomach, confused in her mind, emotions rocking back and forth inside her.

Hunter whispered to her, "I tried to reach her mind so that she would die easy. Somebody else got there first. I . . . don't know who it is."

Elaine stared.

The fire was being brought. Suddenly it touched the oil and Joan flamed up like a human torch.

X

The burning of D'joan at Fomalhaut took very little time, but the ages will not forget it.

Femtiosex had taken the cruelest step of all.

By telepathic invasion he had suppressed her human mind, so that only the primitive canine remained.

Joan did not stand still like a martyred queen.

She struggled against the flames which licked her and climbed her. She howled and shrieked like a dog in pain, like an animal whose brain — good though it is — cannot comprehend the senselessness of human cruelty.

The result was directly contrary to what the Lord Femtiosex had planned.

The crowd of people stirred forward, not with curiosity but because of compassion. They had avoided the broad areas of the street on which the dead underpeople lay as they had been killed, some pooled in their own blood, same broken by the hands of robots, some reduced to piles of frozen crystal. They walked over the dead to watch the dying, but their watching was not the witless boredom of people who never see a spectacle; it was the movement of living things, instinctive and deep, toward the sight of another living thing in a position of danger and ruin.

Even the guard who had held Elaine and Hunter by gripping Hunter's arm — even he moved forward a few unthinking steps. Elaine found herself in the first row of the spectators, the acrid, unfamiliar smell of burning oil making her nose twitch, the howls of the dying dog-girl tearing through her eardrums into her brain. Joan was turning and twisting in the fire now, trying to avoid the flames which wrapped her tighter than clothing. The odor of something sickening and strange reached the crowd. Few of them had ever smelled

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the stink of burning meat before.

Joan gasped.

In the ensuing seconds of silence, Elaine heard something she had never expected to hear before — the weeping of grown human beings. Men and women stood there sobbing and not knowing why they sobbed.

Femtiosex loomed over the crowd, obsessed by the failure of his demonstration. He did not know that the Hunter, with a thousand kills behind him, was committing the legal outrage of peeping the mind of a Chief of the Instrumentality.

The Hunter whispered to Elaine, "In a minute I'll try it. She deserves something better than that . . ."

Elaine did not ask what. She too was weeping.

The whole crowd became aware that a soldier was calling. It took them several seconds to look away from the burning, dying Joan.

The soldier was an ordinary one. Perhaps he was the one who had been unable to tie Joan with bonds a few minutes ago, when the Lords decreed that she be taken into custody.

He was shouting now, shouting frantically and wildly, shaking his fist at the Lord Femtiosex.

"You're a liar, you're a coward, you're a fool, and I challenge you —"

The Lord Femtiosex became aware of the man and of what he was yelling. He came out of his deep concentration and said, mildly for so wild a time:

"What do you mean?"

"This is a crazy show. There is no girl here. No fire. Nothing. You are hallucinating the whole lot of us for some horrible reason of your own, and I'm challenging you for it, you animal, you fool, you coward."

In normal times even a Lord had to accept a challenge or adjust the matter with clear talk.

This was no normal time.

The Lord Femtiosex said, "All this is real. I deceive no one."

"If it's real, Joan, I'm with you!" shrieked the young soldier. He jumped in front of the jet of oil before the other soldiers could turn it off and then he leapt into the fire beside Joan.

Her hair had burned away but her features were still clear. She had stopped the doglike whining shriek. Femtiosex had been interrupted. She gave the soldier, who had begun to burn as he stood voluntarily beside her, the smiles. Then she frowned, the gentlest and most feminine of smiles. Then she frowned, as though there were something which she should remember to do, despite the pain and terror which surrounded her.

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"Now!" whispered the Hunter. He began to hunt the Lord Femtiosex as sharply as he had ever sought the alien, native minds of Fomalhaut III.

The crowd could not tell what had happened to the Lord Femtiosex. Had he turned coward? Had he gone mad? (Actually, the Hunter, by using every gram of the power of his mind, had momentarily taken Femtiosex courting in the skies; he and Femtiosex were both male bird-like beasts, singing wildly for the beautiful female who lay hidden in the landscape far, far below.)

Joan was free, and she knew she was free.

She sent out her message. It knocked both Hunter and Femtiosex out of thinking; it flooded Elaine; it made even Fisi, the Chief of Birds, breathe quietly. She called so loudly that within the hour messages were pouring in from the other cities to Kalma, asking what had happened. She thought a single message, not words. But in words it came to this:

"Loved ones, you kill me. This is my fate. I bring love, and love must die to live on. Love asks nothing, does nothing. Love thinks nothing. Love is knowing yourself and knowing all other people and things. Know — and rejoice. I die for all of you now, dear ones — "

She opened her eyes for a last time, opened her mouth, sucked in the raw flame and slumped forward. The soldier, who had kept his nerve while his clothing and body burned, ran out of the fire, afire himself, toward his squad. A shot stopped him and he pitched flat forward.

The weeping of the people was audible throughout the streets. Underpeople, tame and licensed ones, stood shamelessly among them and wept too.

The Lord Femtiosex turned wearily back to his colleagues.

The face of Lady Goroke was a sculptured, frozen caricature of sorrow.

He turned to the Lady Arabella Underwood. "I seem to have done something wrong, my lady. Take over, please."

The Lady Arabella stood up. She called to Fisi, "Put out that fire."

She looked out over the crowd. Her hard, honest Norstrilian features were unreadable. Elaine, watching her, shivered at the thought of a whole planet full of people as tough, obstinate and clever as these.

"It's over," said the Lady Arabella. "People, go away. Robots, clean up. Underpeople, to your jobs."

She looked at Elaine and the Hunter. "I know who you are and I suspect what you have

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been doing. Soldiers, take them away."

The body of Joan was fire-blackened. The face did not look particularly human any more; the last burst of fire had caught her in the nose and eyes. Her young, girlish breasts showed with heart-wrenching immodesty that she had been young and female once. Now she was dead, just dead.

The soldiers would have shoveled her into a box if she had been an underperson. Instead, they paid her the honors of war that they would have given to one of their own comrades or to an important civilian in time of disaster. They unslung a litter, put the little blackened body on it and covered the body with their own flag. No one had told them to do so.

As their own soldier led them up the road toward the Waterrock, where the houses and offices of the military were located, Elaine saw that he too had been crying.

She started to ask him what he thought of it, but Hunter stopped her with a shake of the head. He later told her that the soldier might be punished for talking with them.

When they got to the office, they found the lady Goroke already there.

The Lady Goroke already there . . . It became a nightmare in the weeks that followed. She had gotten over her grief and was conducting an inquiry into the case of Elaine and D'joan.

The Lady Goroke already there . . . She was waiting when they slept. Her image, or perhaps herself, sat in on all the endless interrogations. She was particularly interested in the chance meeting of the dead lady Panc Ashash, the misplaced witch Elaine, and the non-adjusted man, the Hunter.

The Lady Goroke already there . . . She asked them everything, but she told them nothing.

Except for once.

Once she burst out, violently personal after endless hours of formal, official work, "Your minds will be cleansed when we get through, so it wouldn't matter how much else you know. Do you know that this has hurt me — me! — all the way to the depths of everything I believe in?"

They shook their heads.

"I'm going to have a child, and I'm going back to Manhome to have it. And I'm going to do the genetic coding myself. I'm going to call him Jestocost. That's one of the Ancient Tongues, the Paroskii one, for 'cruelty,' to remind him where he comes from,

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and why. And he, or his son, or *his* son will bring justice back into the world and solve the puzzle of the underpeople. What do you think of that? On second thought, don't think. It's none of your business, and I am going to do it anyway."

They stared at her sympathetically, but they were too wound up in the problems of their own survival to extend her much sympathy or advice. The body of Joan had been pulverized and blown into the air, because the Lady Goroke was afraid that the underpeople would make a *good-place* out of it; she felt that way herself, and she knew that if she herself were tempted, the underpeople would be even more tempted.

Elaine never knew what happened to the bodies of all the other people who had turned themselves, under Joan's leadership, from animals into mankind, and who had followed the wild, foolish march out of the Tunnel of Englok into the Upper City of Kalma. Was it really wild? Was it really foolish? If they had stayed where they were, they might have had a few days or months or years of life, but sooner or later the robots would have found them and they would have been exterminated like the vermin which they were. Perhaps the death they had chosen was better. Joan *did* say, "It's the mission of life always to look for something better than itself, and then to try to trade life itself for meaning."

At last, the Lady Goroke called them in and said, "Good-by, you two. It's foolish, saying good-by, when an hour from now you will remember neither me nor Joan. You've finished your work here. I've set up a lovely job for you. You won't have to live in a city. You will be weather-watchers, roaming the hills and watching for all the little changes which the machines can't interpret fast enough. You will have whole lifetimes of marching and picnicking and camping together. I've told the technicians to be very careful, because you two are very much in love with each other. When they re-route your synapses, I want that love to be there with you."

They each knelt and kissed her hand. They never wittingly saw her again. In later years they sometimes saw a fashionable ornithopter soaring gently over their camp, with an elegant woman peering out of the side of it; they had no memories to know that it was the Lady Goroke, recovered from madness, watching over them.

Their new life was their final life.

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Of Joan and the Brown and Yellow Corridor, nothing remained.

They were both very sympathetic toward animals, but they might have been this way even if they had never shared in the wild political gamble of the dear dead Lady Panc Ashash.

One time a strange thing happened. An underman from an elephant was working in a small valley, creating an exquisite rock garden for some important official of the Instrumentality who might later glimpse the garden once or twice a year. Elaine was busy watching the weather, and the Hunter had forgotten that he had ever hunted, so that neither of them tried to peep the underman's mind. He was a huge fellow, right at the maximum permissable size — five times the gross stature of a man. He had smiled at them friendily in the past.

One evening he brought them fruit. Such fruit! Rare off-world items which a year of requests would not have obtained for ordinary people like them. He smiled his big, shy, elephant smile, put the fruit down and prepared to lumber off.

"Wait a minute," cried Elaine, "why are you giving us this? Why us?"

"For the sake of Joan," said the elephant man.

"Who's Joan?" said the Hunter.

The elephant man looked sympathetically at them. "That's all right. You don't remember her, but I do."

"But what did Joan do?" said Elaine.

"She loved you. She loved us all," said the elephant man. He turned quickly, so as to say no more. With incredible deftness for so heavy a person, he climbed speedily into the fierce lovely rocks above them and was gone.

"I wish we had known her," said Elaine. "She sounds very nice."

In that year there was born the man who was to be the first Lord Jestocost.

— CORDWAINER SMITH

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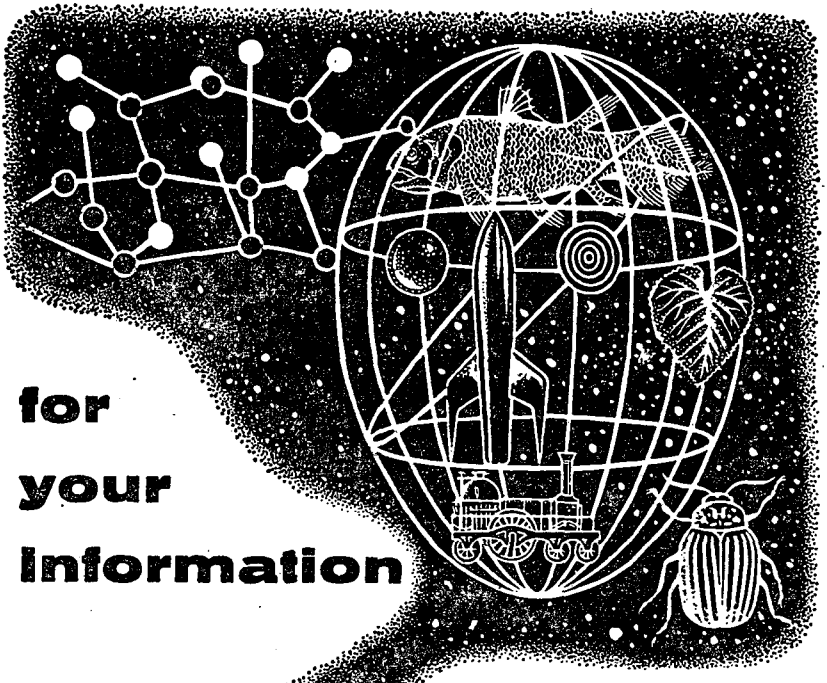

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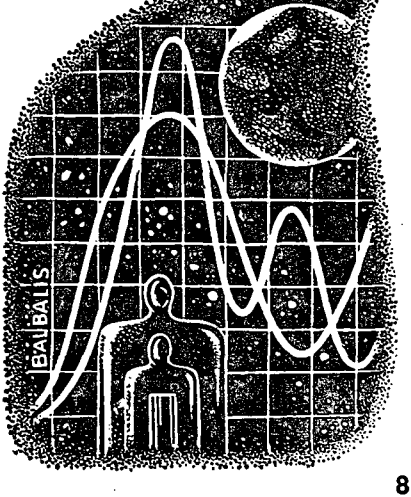

A CENTURY OF FOSSIL MAN

"This," I said to a visitor, handing him a fossilized trilobite from the Silurian period, "is due to three accidents."

"Accidents?" he repeated, wondering whether I mean what I said.

"Accidents! Three of them. The first accident was that this

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trilobite died under circumstances which made it possible for it to become a fossil. The second accident was that the fossil was found. And the third was that it was found by somebody who recognized it for what it was."

The whole discussion had started with the chance remark that we don't know yet whether the human race originated in Asia or in Africa. The fossil finds, I had said, are inconclusive so far, mainly because there are so few of them. Of course, it would have been appropriate if I could have handed my visitor a fossil human skull to illustrate my point. I couldn't do that because there are so few of them, and for that reason they are where they belong, in museums and in university collections. Only about a century ago no museum anywhere had a human fossil. As a matter of fact no director of a museum would have expected to see one.

And that brings me to my story.

Paleontology, the science of fossils and extinct life forms, is one of the sciences that were found essentially by one man. He was Georges Léopold, Baron Cuvier, a French naturalist, born at Montbéliard in 1769; and the work which became the foundation of the new science was his *Recherches sur les ossemens fossiles,* or in English, *Researches on Fossil Bones.* It appeared in 1824, only eight years before Cuvier's death. Cuvier had done wonders with the scant material he had at his disposal and it was only natural that he noticed that among his fossils there, fishes and amphibians, reptiles and mammals, crustaceans and worms, but that fossils of humans were conspicuous by their absence. Man, Cuvier reasoned, must have been a late arrival on earth. The Bible, he pointed out, also said that Man had been created last. Hence Man had not been present when the other creatures became fossils and for that reason it was actually useless to look for human fossils. As Cuvier put it: *l'homme fossil n'existe pas* — "fossil man does not exist."

Just one year after Cuvier's death a Belgian paleontologist by the name of Schmerling finished a voluminous work with the title, *Account of the fossil bones found in caves in the Province of Liege.* In it he pointed out that he had found human remains in the same layers as bones of cave bears, mammoths and so forth, so that it seemed logical to assume that they had lived during the same period.

If anybody who read Schmerling's work remembered that the

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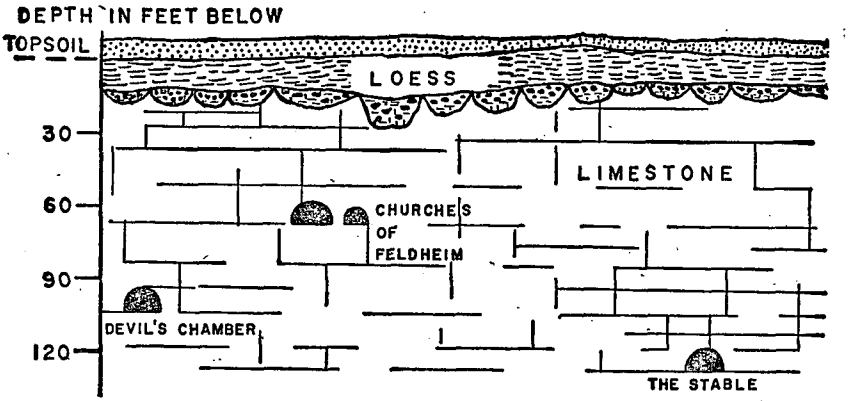

No. 1 The cliff of the Neanderthal Valley before it became a limestone quarry.

Baron von Schlotheim had reported the same situation from a place near Gera in Central Germany some time earlier (in 1820), he probably had the same explanation for both cases. Early settlers had buried their dead in the débris covering cave floors — and the human bones had thereby in death acquired companions they had never known when alive.

For more than three decades nothing happened to disturb these assumptions. If people did not insist on building stone houses there might have been another three or four decades of peace and quiet. But people build, and one of the things they need for building is limestone.

There was one source of limestone which was not only big but easily accessible. Near the small city of Mettmann in western Germany a river, the Dussel, had cut itself a deep and narrow canyon into soft limestone. The gorge even had a name. Three centuries earlier a man by the name of Joachim Neumann had fallen in love with the romantic beauty of the gorge and had visited it again and again. Since he became famous as the author of Christian hymns which he wrote under the name of Joachim Neander, the canyon was named in his honor after his death. It was named Neander Valley, or in German, Neanderthal.

It was in 1856 that the limestone cliffs that formed the walls

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of the canyon became a quarry. Local people knew that there were several natural caves in the face of the cliff. They had even been given separate names. Two neighboring caves were called, nobody knows why, the Churches of Feldhof.

The workmen began their task by cleaning out the caves, and just dumped the loose débris down the cliff to the bottom of the valley, some 70 feet below. While cleaning out the smaller of the two "churches" they found bones and felt obligated to report the fact to the owner of the quarry.

The owner suspected that this might be important. Since the cave had been all cleaned out by the time he arrived, he ordered that the dumped material be carefully searched.

Then he handed all the recovered bones to the locally famous Johann Carl Fuhlrott, a high school teacher, with the remark that these seemed to be bones of the cave bear of which he had heard so much. Fuhlrott saw immediately that the remains were human consisting of the two upper arm bones fragments of other arm bones both femurs a fragment of the pelvis and the top of the skull — the latter was one of the bones that had been dumped. Fuhlrott looked at the heavy bony ridges over the eye sockets. He noted that the whole skull was shallow with a receding forehead. He considered the femurs to be unusually heavy — and concluded that he looked at the remains of a more primitive type of man.

In a lecture he delivered soon afterwards (it was printed with some delay in 1859), he said so. But while Fuhlrott could consider himself a naturalist he knew that his knowledge of anatomy was restricted. But he also knew that Professor Schaaffhausen of the University of Bonn an expert in human anatomy was interested in new discoveries.

He sent the bones to Schaaffhausen, who examined and measured them with utmost care and published a report in 1858, stating that he agreed with Fuhlrott; this was an individual with strangely primitive characteristics. Being a careful man, Schaaffhausen did not attempt to determine its age, saying that he hoped that further discoveries would provide definite clues.

For a while Fuhlroot and Schaaffhausen stood alone. A Dr. PrunerBey in Paris said that these were probably just the remains of an old Celt who had died during a tribal migration. Professor Andreas Wagner in Gottingen considered it more likely that they were the bones of a Dutch sailor, while others

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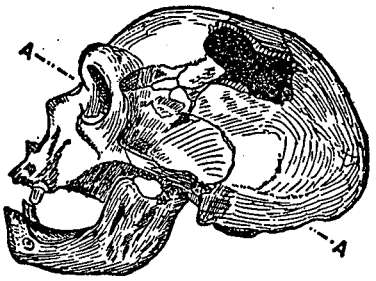
guessed that it might be a Cossack who had taken part in the final campaign against Napoleon.

Enter now Dr. Rudolf Virchow, professor of pathology, having been appointed director of the Pathological Institute in Berlin during the same year workers began cleaning out the caves of the Neanderthal.

Since what I have to report about Virchow will sound as if he had not been too bright, I must say first that he was justly famous as a medical researcher. He reformed the sanitation system of Berlin, and he (somewhat unusually) was also very active politically. For years he was the leader of the Progressive Party of Prussia and was even elected a member of the Reichstag on the Liberal Party slate. But he had limitations. He had carefully investigated the tubercles in human lungs and written an excellent description in a highly literary style. But when it was suggested to him that these tubercles might be caused by a microorganism he had nothing but sarcasm for the little country doctor who advanced this nonsensical idea. (The little country doctor later became a famous bacteriologist. His name was Robert Koch, and in Sweden they awarded him a Nobel Prize for medicine.)



No. 2. Skull of a Neanderthal man (old male) from La Chapelle-aux-Saints, France. In the original skull from the Neander Valley only the portions above the line A — A were preserved.

To Virchow the remains from the Neanderthal were just one more case of what he had been observing for years. He did not guess at nationality or tribe. All he could say that this man had been sick all his life. One could see the marks of his former suffering clearly.

To begin with, this individual happened to be born with an unusually long skull and greatly reduced sinus cavities. In his early childhood he had suffered severely from rachitis. But somehow he got over it and grew to manhood, probably to be a warrior since some minor thickenings might be due to battle injuries. However, the main features of the skull which had misled Fuhlrott (only a high school teacher, after all) and Schaaffhausen (a fine anatomist but not a path-

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No. 3 *Pithecanthropus erectus*, Skull No. 1 from Trinil

ologist) had been produced by *arthritis deformans* and old age. The outer layers of the skull had been reduced as a result of old age and new layers had formed on the inside with ossification of the skin enclosing the brain. What was left of the arms showed signs of severe arthritis.

So said Schaaffhausen; and all this was not advanced as a possibility, or even a probability. It was preceded by the sentence: "We can conclude with absolute certainty — "

One of the men who supported Fuhlrott and Schaaffhausen was Professor William King in England, also an anatomist. After stating the reasons for his position, he then proceeded to give the bones the still famous name *Homo neanderthalensis.*

But most scientists were reluctant to go along. After all, Virchow was Virchow! How could they, who were not even medical men, dispute the findings of a pathologist? There was only one such find and it was certainly possible, if unusual, that the one specimen had belonged to a sickly individual.

In the meantime — in 1864 — at least definite proof that Man and extinct mammals had been contemporaneous had been found.

Jacques Boucher de Crévecoeur de Perthes had for some years asserted that the stone artifacts he had found had been weapons used by primitive man to hunt mammoths. But while these shaped stones, which might easily have been spearpoints, did exist, who could say what had been hunted with them? — if they had been hunting weapons at all. (And one could always point out that Boucher de Perthes had written tragedies for the stage, novels for amusement and diplomatic notes for deception. In short, that he had engaged in unscientific activities.) But the new proof, found by Edouard Lartet in a cave of the Vézére Valley in southern France, was a piece of mammoth tusk, with the outline of a mammoth scratched into it.

The final proof came from Belgium, from a cave at Spy in the vicinity of Namur. It consisted of two (incomplete) skeletons of this type of man, along with bones of extinct animals and stone implements. The particular kind of stone implements

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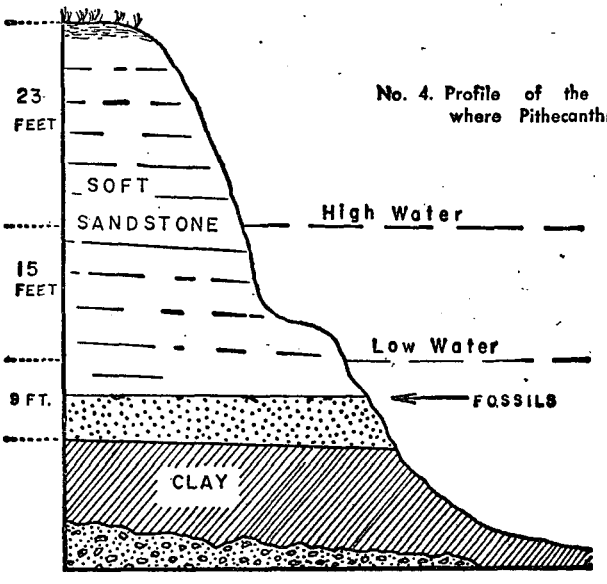
had been found earlier in France in a place named Le Moustier and had been provisionally labelled the Moustérian Culture. We now know that it is typical for the Neanderthalers. But we also know that Lartet's mammoth drawings belongs to a later time, the Magdalénien, which was not "Neanderthal".

Other finds followed. Then some scientists began to feel that the name given by professor King was too specific. One of the suggestions made was *Homo primigenius* (or *Homo primogenitus*) but by then everybody was careful. Since the name means "first" man it was not accepted — maybe somebody would find a still older form. But many scientists were willing to go along with the suggestion *Homo diluvianus*. The geological period preceding the present period was then generally called *Diluvium*, so that the name was suggestive of the time. (Now the geological present is called the "holocene" and the preceding period, for which "Ice Age" is another synonym, goes under the name of "pleistocene.")

As for the still older form it already had a name. Professor Ernst Haeckel, reasoning that at one time a form halfway between ape and man must have existed,



No. 4. Profile of the Bengawan river where Pithecanthropus was found.

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had coined the term *Pithecanthropus* or "apeman" for this hypothetical being. (In his work *General Morphology,* first published in 1866.) And a Dutch physician, Eugéne Dubois by name, had joined the Dutch Colonial Services for the purpose of being sent to the tropics, where he was going to look for the common ancestor of both present-day man *and* of Neanderthal man.

He was sent to Java. There he learned that fossils had been discovered in the banks of the Bengawan river near a place called Trinil. When the river was at its lowest point in 1890 he began to dig.

His first success, as far as human remains were concerned, was a single tooth, but Dubois said to himself that that tooth could have belonged to a now extinct species of ape. However, in 1894 he could shout success. He had found the roof of a skull first and later and some distance — about 30 feet — away a left femur.

As long as he had the skull fragment only he had thought that it belonged to a large now extinct gibbon. But the very human looking femur made it clear that he had found what Haeckel had only deduced, namely *Pithecanthropus erectus,* the "upright apeman".

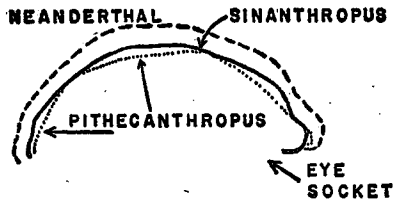

Fig. 5. Profiles of the tops of the skulls of three early forms of humans.

Virchow was asked about his opinion. Virchow pointed out that the femur showed a pathological change — a bone spur which indicated that the owner had suffered from a deep-seated abscess which evidently had healed, indicating nursing by others of its kind. Hence the femur was human.

The skull, on the other hand, belonged to a large extinct gibbon. The two bones had nothing to do with each other; after all they had been found some distance apart. Later on Virchow changed his opinion. The layer was probably too old to contain human remains, and if there had been a gibbon-like creature of this size it might have walked upright because it was too heavy to live in the treetops like the gibbons of our time. By that time Virchow was in his seventies and respect had somewhat waned. Others went ahead with their investigation. They were determined to find out whether this was, or had been, an apeman or not. They did not deny that an

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apeman *might* have existed.

"Brain capacity" became the new battle cry.

Living humans —— pygmies excluded, but otherwise without regard as to skin color, nationality, religion or credit rating — have an average brain capacity of about 1500 cubic centimeters. The Neanderthal types from Germany, Belgium, France and elsewhere in Europe averaged 1200 cubic centimeters or a little more. A large gorilla, largest of the apes, fell a little short of 700 cubic centimeter.

How about Pithecanthropus? Since the skull roof was incomplete there was a little leeway in computing the former content, but the disagreement was minor. It ranged from 900 to 935 cubic centimeters. Nicely in the middle, between gorilla on the one side and *Homo neanderthalensis* on the other.

The unsolved problem that remained was one of distance. The valley of the Bengawan was very far from the valley of the Vezere or even from Croatia where more Neanderthal men had been found. However, if you discounted the arms of the Sunda Sea between Java and the Asian mainland (and who could say whether they had existed then?), there were no insurmountable obstacles between Java and France. Even a slowly wandering tribe, if it kept going, could do it in just one generation.

The sequence seemed clear: some unknown ancestor first, then Pithecanthropus, then Neanderthal man, then modern man.

If you believed in this sequence in Europe in 1900 you were under faint suspicion of being a socialist, unless you had a Ph. D. to indicate that you knew what you were talking about. By 1914 you could believe in this sequence without arousing political suspicious, through a doctorate was still helpful.

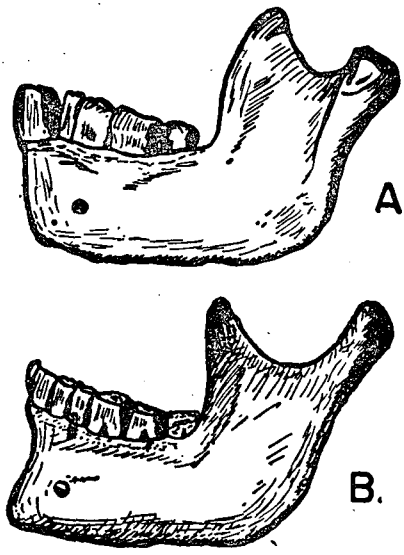

Fig. 6. A. Lower jaw of a Neanderthal man from Krapina in Croatia. B. Lower jaw of a man from an early historical burial site near Tulln in Austria.

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Now we know much more, but aren't so sure any more.

On the one hand we have more reason to think that Pithecanthropus was ancestral to Neanderthal man. On the other hand there is a great deal of doubt whether Neanderthal man is ancestral to us.

Let me take the latter problem first, if only because I sometimes encountered a surprised reaction when I say so.

How could Neanderthal man *not* be ancestral, since he was around a long time earlier? I think that a comparison with dog-breeding will illustrate the point. The animal which was to become the domesticated dog was probably a small jackal-like form. Slowly it was bred larger into forms somewhat resembling today's greyhound, though smaller. Then (this is just an example, not dog-breeding history) let us say that breeders produced the English bulldog, a dog of specialized shape. Much later other breeders went after another shape of dog, say a poodle.

But they would start with the original stock, not with the specialized bulldog.

Neanderthal man would correspond to the bulldog of this example, an early and specialized offshoot. Some skulls have been found that look like Neanderthal man, but with less pronounced special features. Some researchers have assumed that they are hybrid forms. But it is just as possible that they are an older and not yet so specialized form of Neanderthalers.

The history of the discoveries of human fossils since Dubois unearthed Pithecanthropus would make a very long article by itself, but at this point we need only the most pronounced highlights. In 1929 Dr. Davidson Black discovered skulls near Peking which were subsequently labelled *Sinanthropus pekinensis*, with a brain capacity higher than that of Pithecanthropus but still less than Neanderthal. More specimens of Pithecanthropus were added from Sangiran (Java) by Dr. G. H. R. von Koenigswald. A very large Neanderthal man turned up in Rhodesia, Africa. And southern Africa added a whole series of small forerunners of Man which are collectively called the australopithecines. (The word has nothing to do with the Australian continent, it merely means "southern monkeys".)

One theory has it that our own ancestors originated in Africa and migrated northward to Europe to turn into early Europeans. Those who stayed on Africa were the ancestors of the Africans of today. According to

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that theory, the Neanderthal type originated in eastern Asia and performed a westward migration to Europe rather late in their history. But no decision on whether this theory or rival theories are correct can be made at the moment.

Since the question of who is ancestral to whom cannot yet be decided, researchers have sorted all human fossils into three groups, once more using brain volume as the criterion. They distinguish:

(A) the australopithecines, with a brain capacity of 450 to 700 cc;

(B) *Homo erectus*, with a brain capacity of 775 to 1200 cc;

(C) *Homosapiens*, with a brain capacity of over 1200 cc.

This sorting scheme puts Pithecanthropus into the *Homo erectus* group, but puts the late European neanderthalers (as well as the neanderthaler from Rhodesia) into the *Homo sapiens* group. To repeat, this is essentially a method of sorting, and does not necessarily indicate actual relationships. To clear that question up we need many more of the "triple accidents."

— WILLY LEY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FORECAST

A couple of years ago Gordon R. Dickson wrote a novel called *The Genetic General* — its title as a serial was Dorsai! — which added a good bit to his already very high stature as one of science-fiction's best-liked and most prolific authors. Ever since we've been after him to tell us more of his strange and wonderful words of the future — the Dorsai and the Friendlies, the parts of humanity that have given themselves to the stars and are now coming together again in a brilliant synthesis of divergent heredities . . . and the man has finally come through for us. The title is *Soldier, Ask Not;* it's a short novel; it's complete in the next issue of *Galaxy.*

In the same issue — *The Children of Night* (scheduled for this issue, but squeezed out to make room for Wyman Guin's timely and delightful return), a new Philip K. Dick story, Willy Ley's fine column . . . and much more. See you then!

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JUNGLE SUBSTITUTE

BY BRIAN W. ALDISS

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

This was the world that machines had made. Could men hope to win it back?

I

The eastern sky glittered over the city and the sun came up.

Robin Hedging wasn't one of the superstitious kind who thought you would die within twenty-four hours of seeing the morning sun through glass. Nevertheless, he lowered the window of the bus to stare out at it. This was always a good moment for him, when the rain ration had stopped falling and the sun rose before you got to work.

The city stood high on piers above the plain. The plain as yet would be dark. That was what gave Robin the thrill: the thought of that grim black land where no humans went, where terrors dwelt. Covertly, he circled himself.

His father looked up from beside him, catching the gesture.

"What's the matter, son?

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You thinking something you shouldn't do?"

"It's nothing."

"You worrying about seeing the sun through glass? You don't have to. You're wearing your spectacles — that makes two lots of glass. The superstition says you only die if you see the sun through one bit of glass."

"That means I'm going to die, Father. I opened the window and saw it through my spectacles alone." Robin spoke with as much of a sneer as he could muster, but a pang tore at his heart. He had not thought enough. But he'd seen the sun through one thickness of glass before and not died . . . Only maybe then there'd been some extenuating circumstances . . . Maybe he'd seen a robot before seven . . .

His father's pouchy face shook.

"You're a careless young fool, Robin. You'll cost me my job yet."

"You know what happens to people who voice their greatest fear?"

That was a remark to provide a row in any company, but a man sitting behind the Hedgings leaned forward and tapped Robin on the shoulder.

"Don't mind me butting in, young H, but I could hear what you and your dad were saying. I don't think you've got anything to worry about. The saying is that you mustn't see the sun through a *pane* of glass. Now you wouldn't count your specs as a pane of glass would you, so you're okay."

Old Sam Hedging dug his son hard in the ribs, and with a downward droop to his mouth indicated he was to say as little as possible. He then turned to look at the intruder.

Ovine was a sad baggy man with a square face on which the patina of old eczema papules was partly concealed below a straggling moustache. His one-piece suit was new, and of course sharp blue. Both Hedgings dreaded his presence, on the bus or in the Distributive Point, but were afraid to say so.

"What are spectacles if they aren't panes of glass?" Sam asked.

"I'm only trying to help the boy."

"Well, I'm asking you, O, what are spectacles if they aren't panes of glass?"

"I suppose you're right." Ovine turned his face away, and then, struck by a sudden thought, said, "But in that case they are *two* panes of glass, so your son's all right."

"I'm the best judge of that —"

Robin tried not to listen to the argument. He liked the journey to work, but these older men always spoilt it with their tiny ar-

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guments. This third deck of the bus was full of men, mostly in working one - pieces, haggling over little things. Well, you took your choice: you haggled over little things, or you kept quiet. There did not seem to be any other alternatives.

They were passing over Dunshinnan Bridge now. Robin braced himself. As the great lighted palace of the bus trundled forward at its statutory twenty miles an hour, he looked down into the canyon. Yes, night was still down there, impervious to the lights on the bridge, night and the ancestral earth. He thought he saw something white crawl down there — but it would have been a sheet of paper if it was anything.

Though the population was held steady now, the government had deemed it necessary to expand the city. That had been over four — or was it five? — centuries ago, but Robin had studied urbography during his year at school. He still recalled some of the details.

The new sector, Dunshinnan, had been built up on piles to join the rest of the city. But an error had been made. Always there were errors, in government, in engineering, in life. One understood that. The cybos and robos were no more effective at dealing with error than were humans. Dunshinnan had been constructed with its base a meter lower than the main city and with a gulf of a hundred and thirty meters separating the two sections. It was a large error; but bridges were built to span the gulf, no harm was done — and every morning Robin got his stomach-wrenching view of midnight.

The first stop over the bridge was where the Hedgings and Ovine and one or two others — the pallid Farven, the choleric Claysbank — got off. They climbed down onto the walk, old Sam Hedgings and Ovine still joined in grumbling talk. It was not far to the edge of the Dunshinnan, but high walls prevented one looking over. At first, before the walls had been erected, people had thrown themselves over the railings into the drop. There was still a mystique about it. Particularly on Kennedy and Vareller Days, dedicated parties would scale the walls and sacrifice themselves over the drop. You heard about it in whispers.

Robin checked himself at Distributive Point D 2's door. Farven laid a hand on his arm.

"You're dreaming again, young H," he said, smiling with a nervy twitch. "F's go before H's under a threshold, or they used to when I was a boy."

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Robin apologized and stepped back. The little group went in in alphabetical order, those who knew their alphabet helping the others. This was an important juncture, the beginning of work, when obviously one had to be careful. Demons were most active in the early morning.

The lights came on in D 2. Supervisor stood there awaiting the men. He was the only cybo who remained switched on during the night, a large and immobile bulk of a machine. His sides and the containers on his sides had become plastered with notices, waybills, delivery slips and chalked figures. It was considered unlucky to remove these until Renovation Day.

"Come in, humans. Equality and happiness in your day's w-w-work."

Supervisor had developed a slight stammer with his w's. Farven, the mech, was unable to remedy it; when the robomech arrived on his bi-monthly inspection of the point, he would repair it.

Robin followed his father up to Supervisor. They asked the traditional question, "Is there any special w-w-work you require of us today?" It was reckoned judicious to imitate the speech of Supervisor, thus gathering for oneself some of his power.

As always, the answer was negative.

The Hedgings climbed into their gallery; already the first deliveries of goods were arriving. Claysbank waddled round, switching on the auxiliary robos. The first one he activated rolled behind him, clattering to itself as it checked the output of its fellows, recharging them from its own power supplies if necessary. As more and more machines came alive, the hall filled with noise and light.

For Robin, it was a cheering noise. This was life. No ill-omens; everything working with as much efficiency as could be humanly expected. He followed his father into their little hut up on the catwalk. Already they had a light on their switchboard. It was a sign of plenty. The spirits were harmless.

Old Hedging acknowledged the signal, settling himself down into their battered chair as he did so.

"Grocery consignment One. DP D2. One thousand two hundred sixty-five nine-ounce cans marrow soup."

Down on the floor, they could see the robotruck that had announced itself. It had drawn in to the first bay, where one of the point's loaders hauled off its freight with padded metal

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hands, stacking the cans with its auxiliary hands so that they stood separately on the conveyor belt behind it and were carried one by one into the distance.

In response to the announcement, Sam shifted a bead along a thin wire. Supervisor would be keeping exact details of the entry; Sam's was just a rough double-check.

"Grocery consignment Two. DP D2. Five hundred twenty-eight twenty-ounce cans marycake pudding, two hundred nine ten-ounce cans marycake pudding."

"Milk consignment. DP D2. Two hundred nine-ounce containers Grade A milk. Six hundred sixty-two eighteen-ounce containers Grade A milk. Three hundred ninety-three twenty-eight-ounce containers Grade A milk."

Laconically, Sam moved two more beads across the wire. Business was warming up. More robotrucks were arriving with more of the day's supplies for Dunshinnan Second District. They called their orders methodically as they entered. The automatic cop jockeyed them into place, his hand-sized fliers leading them to allotted bays, where they were unloaded. The big hall was humming and stuttering with the activity of robots and humans.

The whole city was humming with activity. It was the same sort of activity, did Robin but know it, that characterized a chicken's rushing around when its head is cut off. The mechanical business of city life ground on, mindlessly.

No conscious government was left. Men capable of governing died or were killed or shot themselves or escaped centuries ago. The machinery of government ground on with no human hand to steer it. In the steel palm of the city, life crawled thoughtlessly, and obeyed the laws of a metal jungle. A million witless robos kept the system going, and each year became a little more entangled with the system.

From his vantage point, Sam saw the newscart trundle in. It was a red vehicle with auto tracks on either side, and very noticeable among the subdued colors of the other vehicles.

"I'm going down onto the floor, Robin. Do you think you can manage?"

"Of course, Father. Luck!"

"And you, boy."

They both circled themselves with inpointing forefingers, and Sam moved along the catwalk and down to the floor.

Moving carefully so as not to touch any of the robos — with good reason, for it was considered a sign of forthcoming in-

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jury if you touched one of them while they were at work — he reached the red vehicle just as it was announcing its consignment.

"Newspost consignment. DP D2. Four hundred seventy copies *City*. Three hundred eighty-three copies *City and Star*. Three hundred fifty-two copies *Tidings*. Seventy copies *Dunshinnan Light*."

Dexterously, Sam picked copies of three of the four newsdigests off the racks before they were tossed onto the conveyor. Claysbank arrived and began to do the same thing. Smiling, Sam signalled a thumbs-up sign at his son, watching through the cabin window.

Someone in DP D2 went short of their morning news every morning. No system is perfect. The men in the point were careful to see that it was a different house that missed out each time.

II

Putting the tablets in his pocket, old Hedging strolled to the far end of the bay. Always, if the day had begun well, he liked this little exercise, liked to see that everything was going smoothly, liked to smell the sweet oil and warm metal and the occasional tang of bad food, where something had fallen off the conveyor belt and eluded the sweep of the cybocleaner. You couldn't have a better job than in the distributive point — except in Government, of course. But that was not for the likes of the Hedgings. He felt happy that he had inherited this job, and comfortable to think that he would hand it down to Robin.

His reverie faded. Ovine was watching him. Not watching him openly, but standing behind a a stanchion and spying, for all the world like a banshee in a cartoon. He pretended to look the other way when he saw Sam's eye on him.

Ovine's job was one of the rare kind that machines did less efficiently than a man of average ability.

He was a floor retriever. Of the material that fell to the floor, not all was rubbish to be swept into the metal maws of the cleaners; much of it was perfectly good food and such like, which had tumbled off the conveyor and could still be used. For some reason — probably a design flaw — the cleaners found difficulty in distinguishing such articles from genuine trash. But Ovine could, so Ovine had a genuinely functional job, and was therefore regarded by supers like the Hedgings and Farvan with suspicion and

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contempt, and the fear that went with suspicion and contempt. A retriever's job, boasting no particular pitch of its own, was non-inheritable. Ovine had arrived to take up the job only last month. He was not a good acquisition.

"You looking for something?" Sam asked him.

"No, Mr. Hedging," Ovine said.

It was a deadly insult. Only if they had been eating together would it have been propitious for Ovine to have used anything but Sam's initial when addressing him. To have one's name spoken out loud like this was asking for trouble.

Angrily, Sam lumbered forward. Ovine backed away in alarm, but before he could get away, Sam broke one of his tablets between them. The printed circuits lay on the floor in a scatter of glass. The misfortune had been handed back to its instigator.

Although Ovine had been defeated, Sam was unsettled by the incident. He strolled round the floor, grumbling to the other men, with whom Ovine was just an unpleasant newcomer. Soothed by the sympathy he gained, Sam returned to the little cabin up in the roof.

The beads were piling up on the other side of the wire. Sam took over from his son, gave him the copy of the *Light* and settled to look through the other news-digests.

Robin turned the pages of the tablet slowly. He liked to watch the pictures struggle slowly into life and color. Somehow their efforts to perform efficiently always woke a chord of sympathy in him. Their meaning interested him less. These stories, fact and fiction mixed, and told all in picture form, had never meant much to him. He dropped the tablet, exchanged signs with his father and went in his turn for a stroll about the point.

His thoughts were chiefly on Gina Lombard, their new lodger. So beautiful, that girl, so shy and yet so lively, with arms so ripe and soft! It would be good to get back and see her... He caught Ovine looking at him.

"Are you wanting to speak to me?", he asked.

"No — er, no, young H. I was merely thinking how busy we are today," Ovine said, fingering his moustache. "I am not quite used to the routine yet, being new here."

"Where did you work before?"

"I was on structure maintenance."

Robin had no desire to talk. He moved away, and went along the other side. Farven popped

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out of a companionway and laid a hand on his arm; Robin was none too fond of the way Farven clutched arms, but he greeted the old man civilly enough.

"You don't want to talk to that O too much, young H," Farven said, putting his pale nose up towards Robin's eyes, as if to peck at them. "He's got the evil eye. He upset your father not ten minutes ago. And see that moustache on his face — isn't that a sign of Neg?"

"You are being old-fashioned," Robin protested.

"Am I? Am I now? We shall see. But remember this: tomorrow night is Wellpurgers' Night . . . O may get his name burnt if he isn't too careful."

Robin sucked in his breath. Something cold tingled down his back. He hated these old men with their relish of the rites; they seemed to see it less as a grim necessity than as a pleasure.

"He's new. We must try to make allowances," he said, and moved off before Farven could answer. The old man became garrulous and addressed you like a public meeting if he was upset.

Dodging an empty truck rattling towards the exit, Robin climbed down the nearby companionway. This was the section of the point that fascinated him most. The steps wound down for a long way; there were also elevators, but only robos used them.

He emerged into what was known as the Services. The Services had one overriding attraction for him: They were on the ground, the real ground, the Earth, the territory he glimpsed when crossing Dunshinnan Bridge. It lay beyond the concrete walls.

The Services formed a complex series of sub-roads, entirely enclosed, entirely lit by selumce. Robin was careful not to get in the way of the purely automatic traffic that moved by. Its reactions were not always as fast as they should be, which was why everything was geared down to travel at no more than twenty miles an hour. At twenty miles an hour, human and robo reactions work at maximum efficiency together.

A slinker with a large D2 painted on its side moved up and offered itself. Robin jumped into the small cab, grateful to be out of the rancid wind that blew down here. They chugged down the straight road that was D2.

That straight road ran for an uncurving ten and a half miles. Above it was the double row of dwellings, one thousand two hundred and sixty-five of them, that made the D2 Avenue. In Dunshinnan there were four

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hundred such Services below four hundred such avenues, some longer, some shorter than this. The city proper, of course, was a bigger proposition altogether.

From the roof appeared the conveyor belt that had been loaded in the distributive point Robin had just left. It worked to the lower level in steps, feeding its contents onto another and synchronized belt that ran at eye level all along the Services. Cybocheckers fussed at this trouble point. Quick bursts of code flashed up to Supervisor, squatting impeturbably somewhere above.

Chugging further, the slinker moved beneath the houses. Here Robin felt less comfortable, although the gloom they had entered held its own kind of fearful pleasure. This was a region of stretching hands, lit only by the EL of the bulkhead above. As the eye-level belt rumbled down the ten-mile stretch, little photoelectric eyes winked secret signals to the bulkhead above.

A load for House 549 signalled itself to House 549. As it rode beneath the house, autoarms came down, scooping hands lifted the load, bore it up and into chute mouths that gaped open in the bulkhead. Circling himself, Robin watched the process. He had watched it for years. It never ceased to hold him. In the busy feeding movements of the arms and mouths there was a symbol of some colossal and unending greed bigger than a human greed.

The Services maintenance trucks came round less frequently than they should do (in fact some heretics whispered that the city was slowly running to a standstill). The arms and jaws developed minor eccentricities. Some snatched too soon, some almost too late; many squeaked or whined as they did their task — and at this time of day they were kept busy. No. 634 had greedy arms that snatched 632's groceries as well as its own. No. 987 regularly broke its fruit juice jars. These foibles were known to the robos, and allowed for where possible.

The clatter of falling goods and the buzz of alarmed cybos came to Robin. He called to the slinker to stop, jumped out and looked back down the somber subway.

"City sprites, the main supply belt has stopped!" he exclaimed.

The eye-level belt was still on the move. The belt coming down from above had lurched to a halt. He heard men's voices shouting, his father's among them.

A figure appeared, running down the steps of the stopped

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conveyor belt. It was Ovine. He slipped among rolling cans, threw up his hands and fell onto the moving belt knees first. He buckled and stayed there.

Clattering feet sounded down the companionway. The red-faced Claysbank appeared, brandishing a stick. Farven and Sam Hedging were not far behind him. Above their voices echoed the voice of Supervisor, calling for order.

Although he knew they were not after him, Robin felt alarm. These sudden persecutions were common; whether or not he was their victim, they scared him.

As his pursuers arrived in the Services, Ovine pulled himself up. The belt had carried him some way towards where Robin stood. He got onto his knees, and above him mouths opened and mechanical hands reached down for him. Robin shouted.

In that moment he was no longer a doubter. He believed to the hilt all the whispers he had ever heard. He knew that the city really belonged to a Higher Power — and that the Higher Power had heart as well as hands of metal.

His scream acted as a warning to Ovine. The retriever looked up in time. As the arms came down, he jumped. He landed almost at Robin's feet.

"Don't let them get me!"

One of the cybos had stepped into the path of the running men, its arms spread. Claysbank hit it across the shoulder. It lost its balance and fell. Something inside it sizzled and flashed.

Robin stood before Ovine. He had no weapon, but he could not let the man be killed without going to his rescue. Gasping, Ovine picked himself up, half-heartedly attempting to explain as he stood behind Robin. Robin was not listening. For the attackers had stopped. Beyond the cybo they stood, staring at its length, and at the smoke curling from it.

III

All the way home, old Hedging talked of the incident. The smoke issuing from the metal body had formed the sign of the circle. He had seen it, and the others thought they had too. It must mean something.

Whatever it meant, it had stopped their hunt for Ovine. Bit by bit, Robin pieced together what had happened. Ovine, walking carelessly across the floor, had got in the way of a robotruck. The truck had swerved and bowled into another vehicle. Together, the two trucks had jammed into the conveyor belt and stopped it.

"You know what it means

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when two robos hit each other," Sam said in a fearful undertone. "Some human has put them at cross purposes. Who'd do that but Ovine? That's why we determined to have his blood. Otherwise the spirits might have had ours."

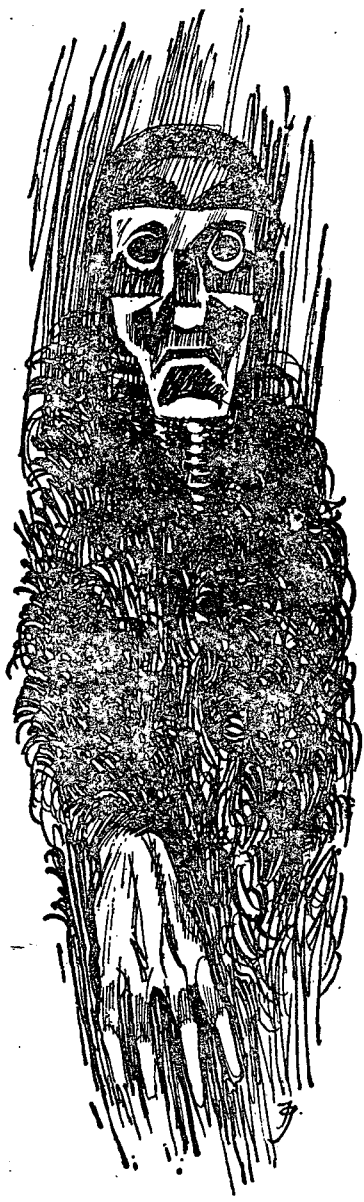
"So we should have had him," agreed Farven from the seat in front, "but for that sign of the circle. What's it mean? The powers of metal must be on Ovine's side."

"They're against us right enough," Robin agreed. "We've a thousand man-hours in overtime to do now, to make up the value of that cybo. You shouldn't have knocked him down."

Preferring to ignore this assertion, Farven said merely, "It's Wellpurging Night tomorrow. If Ovine is fool enough to show his face tomorrow, we must have his blood." His nose was as sharp as a dagger.

He nodded his parting benediction curtly as he moved to leave the bus.

The Hedgings were gloomily silent when they stepped off at Avenue C378. They had some way to walk down the pedestrian path to their home. The city, large though it was, was virtually without architecture. Everything had been spread out, with several low buildings taking the place of the large city



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blocks that had been the fashion a score of centuries ago, back in the days of improperly mechanized ground cities. The centralization that created the need for big buildings, as well as traffic problems, had also been done away with. Civic centers had been dispersed. The Services supply routes solved the old pressing need for convenient shopping centers. Government itself took place in fully automated hutments. There was no core to the city, only a logic and a finite number of streets.

The front wall of their home was adorned with a motif of colored geometrical designs, functional as well as decorative, for the motif served as an additional means of identifying the house beside the number. It was said that no two houses in the entire city bore the same pattern. Otherwise they were all alike.

They genuflected on the threshold, waited until nobody wearing a black suiting was in sight, and went in. Robin was glad to see that Gina Lombard was in.

"Hello, L, you are back promptly." They were not yet familiar enough to call each other by their first initial.

"I was arranging your groceries. I hope you don't mind."

Their wants for the day had come up through the Services hatch and lay in the delivery baskets. Robin shuddered to think of what would have happened to Ovine if the metal hands had caught him and tried to force him into that two-foot-square hatch. Death was everywhere. He saw how necessary it was to propitiate it.

He lost some of his unease as he talked to Gina. She was beautiful with her trim black hair that came almost to a peak above her eyes; and her conversation, though guarded by formality, had an unusual quality about it that interested Robin. Instinctively he felt she was "unsafe", without knowing quite what he meant by that. He felt nothing but pleasure when his father moodily retired to the sitting room and turned on the illiscop.

Robin and Gina were sitting together on the kitchen bench when Mrs. Hedging arrived. She had won herself some reputation as a hag, and spent much of every day going among her neighbours, counselling them. As her popularity spread further afield, her days became longer. Since the morrow was to be a special day, she opened the supper without a word.

Robin felt his account of what happened at the DP die on his

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lips; though he spoke to Gina, he knew his mother was listening, and feared that she would construe something evil from his tale. Was there not some prohibition about retelling bad events?

In the night, he had a vile dream. People he knew took on a sudden menace and closed in on him. They extended steel claws at him. He fell through the ground. He fell through space. But space had a floor. On the floor stood his parents. He fell towards them. They opened their mouths. The inside of their mouths was pocked and roughened by eczema. As he fell, their tongues —

He woke. In the dark, an abysmal rumble came. The rubbish hatch was emptying automatically into the Services, where it would be collected in the morning. Throughout the city, and Dunshinnan, thousands, millions, of hatches would be vomiting their muck down into the cavernous depths. The fact became part of his nightmare. He could hardly struggle out of it.

Stranded at last on the muddy shore of wakefulness, Robin wiped his brow and gulped for breath. He climbed from his bunk and peered out of the window.

All was utterly quiet, utterly dark — but somewhere across the city he thought a fire burned. He desperately needed the comfort of Gina's bed, but had not the courage to leave his tiny cabin.

At work in the Distributive Point next morning, he remained ill at ease. The omens had set against him.

He told nobody, but he had seen a cloud like a cross in the sky, and his spectacles had misted when he drank his morning beverage — a sure presentiment that there were things hidden from him, awaiting their time. Walking moodily about the floor, behind one of the unpacking bays, he came across Ovine's vest.

Its sharp blue rendered it instantly identifiable. He shied at it, and looked about to see if anyone was watching.

John Ovine had not arrived that morning. The men had cursed and demanded his address of Supervisor. Supervisor had sent them stonily back to work. The mood in the place was bad. Even up in the cosy little hut on the catwalk, which had been handed down through four generations of Hedgings, tension reigned in every creak of Sam's swivel chair.

Robin plunged in his hand into the breast pocket of Ovine's garment. He brought out a note-

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book. He retired to the men's room to investigate it, making the sign of the circle over it.

The notebook bore stamped initials on its cover, GIB, and beneath it the words for which the initials stood, Government Investigation Bureau.

It fell from Robin's hands. Trembling, he picked it up again and leafed through it.

The contents were obscure, being mainly in note form, or in words that defied Robin's simple reading standards. But their intent was clear enough, even to him. Ovine had been watching them for the government, and was making a report on them. He had found all the supers redundant. Of the humans working in the Distributive Point, only the functional job Ovine was temporarily holding — the despised job of floor retriever — had any practical purpose. The list of men who could be dismissed included both Hedgings and the pallid Farven.

"But — but — we've got rights to the job!"

He was standing in the metal cubicle, whispering the words aloud. The job was threatened. There were rumors about what happened to people who could not find jobs, just as there was glum tattle about what happened to the aged who were taken into homes.

His father held documents of inheritance for the checking job, it was true. But the agreement was with the family, had been for over two centuries. If the Distributive Point cancelled the arrangement, there would be nothing they could do about it.

Who owned the DP? He didn't know — the government presumably. But who was the government? Who owned the Government Investigation Bureau? Obviously, those same faceless people . . . or powers.

His dream came back to him. The ground was opening beneath him sure enough.

IV

He stuck it in the Distributive until midday. His father and the other men only played on his nerves with their remarks about hunting down Ovine and sacrificing him as a warlock during the night's revels. He knew how feeble these affairs often were when the evening came, but the talk of blood did him no good. When the rest of them went down to the autobar, he slipped out.

Supervisor would not miss him, or if he was missed would not sack him. He was — no, he'd never realized it till now — redundant, as the watching eyes of Ovine had quickly seen. He

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was a super. It was no term of praise; it probably meant superfluous.

Though Robin was not a perceptive man, a vision came to him. It came in the form of a question: how long ago did the present state of affairs crystallize?

His education in the robo and illiscop classes had been of the most rudimentary during his year at school. He had no concept of history, but after the question came the reflection: things can't always have been like this.

He did not know what a large mental step he had taken.

First, he needed someone to talk to. He thought of the youths he played football with once a week; there was nobody there he cared to confide in. He thought of Gina and her bright eyes. She would be someone who would be able to think — perhaps more clearly than he could. He did not know where she worked, for there were tabus about inquiring into other people's jobs, but there might be an address he could find in her room. He caught a bus home.

It was strange, moving round the town at this time of day; he had a sudden breath of unaccustomed freedom that carried him back to his early boyhood before civilization closed in on him. But the clerks talking in the seat behind him reminded him that captivity could not be eluded by a bus ride. They were talking about the Dark Thing that flew over the city on Well-purging Night. He might have been sitting with his workmates!

As they crawled over Dunshinnan Bridge, he looked down and saw the earth far below. It was in shadow and no features were discernable. On sudden impulse, Robin pulled Ovine's notebook out of his pocket, flinging it wide of the bus.

Fluttering like a tiny live thing, it fell below the level of the bridge. The parapet cut it from view.

Alighting at C378, he became suddenly cautious. Some of his excitement left him. The last person he wanted to see was his mother. It was unlikely, he thought, that she would be at home, but she would be in the neighborhood and particularly active on a day like this. Interference from her would be intolerable.

Few people were about. He moved forward fast, not liking to run. People did not run. The two women he passed kept their eyes to themselves. He let himself through the front door.

"Mother! L!" he called in a whisper, hearing his heart beat.

Something moved in the kitch-

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en. Swivelling his head, eyes astare, he saw the evening's meal tip out of the hatch into the basket. Smiling limply to himself, he moved upstairs to Gina's cabin. His nerves were bad. The house held a weird desolation; even the lights and shadows that lay about its floors felt unnatural at this unvisited time of day. A stair creaked under his tread and a rictal jerk took the corner of his mouth.

Cursing himself, making the circle, he went at a run into Gina's tiny cabin.

It was better there. A faint prurient interest strengthened him when he opened her tiny closet and saw her dress there. He touched its fabric.

"Gina!" he said, but there was no answer.

She had so few possessions. In her suitcase under the pink face towel he came on the leather notebook with the initials GIB stamped on the cover.

When he had uttered a few broken noises, he opened it. Written inside was her name, and the address of the Government Investigation Bureau. He had seen the same address in Ovine's notebook, without taking it in.

Now the whole business was on a different footing. Finding Ovine's notebook had shown him a trap was in operation; finding Gina's notebook told him the trap was aimed at him and his father.

He hardly took in the few scanty notes in the notebook. Mostly there were symbols — Gina, he could see at a glance, operated on a more sophisticated level than Ovine, for all that they worked for the same organization — though on one page, under his initials, she had scrawled, "Good intelligence potential, poor lad, but a savage, just a savage."

He was making little uncouth sounds to himself, trying to take the shape of these new things. His first impulse was to escape — but there was nowhere to escape to. So he had to go and confront Gina.

A sound came that was not his. Mouth jerking open, he turned. A terrible thing stood just inside the doorway, a thing with an idiot metal face and body of fur, tatty fur that ended in human feet.

He screamed hate and fear at it with all his lungs' strength as he flung himself upon it. He had the girl's open suitcase held by the handle. He struck the thing with the corner of it.

The thing shrieked and fell back, striking its head on the doorpost. Then it slid slowly to the floor. The metal mask

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dropped away as it went, revealing the wizened face of Robin's mother. Striking the mat, the body twitched, kicked ineffectually at the wall and was silent.

Almost beyond horror, Robin sank to his knees, brushing the stupid mask under the bunk. This was a new Wellpurging costume his mother had on. Once he called to her. Even when the faintest exhalation of breath came to his ears, he could not bring himself to touch her. Suddenly strength came back to his chilled muscle fiber. He up and ran.

V

All the way to the GIB address, he argued with himself. She'd had no right to come sneaking up to him like that. She should have taken that terrifying mask off, apeing the puissance of robos. His guilt remained, whatever he told himself.

Yet he felt no love or regret. His mother had always been aloof, wrapped in the mysteries of her hagdom. He might have behaved foolishly, but he had had the sense to take a small steak knife from the kitchen as he left. He clutched it in his pocket like a ju-ju.

The GIB stood on a corner of a main trafficway. On the opposite corner was a canteen. Robin entered it, gave his works number and received a plateful of food in exchange for the pledge of an hour's overtime.

This was a poor move to begin with. The pledge would be sent back to his DP, who would then have a check on his whereabouts. He thought, I need to get away to another city. But how did one go about it? Was it possible?

The meal was welcome. He ate it slowly, his eyes on the GIB building. He realized he was lonely and frightened. He had broken territorial tabus; he had committed matricide; if the Dark Thing flew tonight, it would have a call for him.

People were beginning to leave the building opposite. Robin grew more undecided. At last he rose to go, and at that moment he saw Gina in the street.

She was walking towards the GIB. Hurriedly, Robin removed his spectacles and rubbed them on his shirt before taking another look. It was Gina. Her head was down, and she carried depression in every line of her sleek body. As she entered the modest door of the GIB, Robin crossed the road after her.

In the doorway, a cluster of people leaving work got in his way. They saw him and made the quick gestures of covering

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themselves. Having no idea what tabu he had offended against, Robin could only conclude that here in a different region of town, and in a different business, people must have different tabus. He pushed past them and went upstairs.

The interior of the GIB was shabby and utilitarian, even by the standards to which the Hedgings were accustomed. A robot stood at the top of the stairs, but it seemed to be out of commission. Doors with glass panels stood open, the rooms beyond for the most part deserted. When he came to a door that was closed, he threw it open.

It was a tiny cabin with one window, giving a view across to the canteen in which he had eaten. It was empty, but over by the window was a closet, the door of which was open. Faint sounds — gasping or weeping — came from it. For a second, skin crawled along Robin's neck; then he moved forward.

Gina turned and came into his arms. He thrust a hand over her mouth, though fetish objects like lips and teeth touched his palm.

"I'm not going to hurt you, L. I just want to ask you questions. Calm down!"

When she stopped struggling and her eyes looked less wild, he removed his hand.

"You're a matricide!" she said.

She had been back to her room — it must have been almost immediately after Robin had left — and found Mrs. Hedging at the foot of the stairs, dead. The hag had lived long enough to drag herself a little way for help. Shocked, Robin sat on Gina's table and told her what had happened. As he finished, lights came automatically on in the room.

Looking round in surprise, he saw the tawdry little room for the first time. It was recognizable as a room that had been inhabited for centuries; the atmosphere reminded him so much of the Hedging hut in DP2 that he felt a momentary nostalgia. Nodding to the line of ancestors' skulls on the shelf above the door, he asked, "You hold this room by inheritance?"

"No. I'm temporary here while the boss is on an investigation elsewhere. Robin, why do you tell me all this? You must see I'm your enemy."

"Sometimes you're closer to your enemies than your friends."

She walked over and switched the light off, so that the deep blue outside the window turned blankety gray.

"Roboffcers'll get me unless I do something," he said.

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"Robofficers rarely kill humans unless they are sick or aged. Didn't you observe that? But no — all you people have been carefully trained not to use your powers of observation, not to believe in cause and effect. Instead, you're indoctrinated into tying your minds up with a tissue of superstitions! Robin, can't you see how man is lost in this city, ruling himself by fear and mob law and gobbledy-gook?"

Shaking his head as if to avoid her words, he grasped her wrist.

"You don't say why you were spying on us. You were working with Ovine, weren't you?"

"Let go of me! Listen, never mind what I was doing. Just believe this — I have more reason to suspect you than you me. If you will trust me, I will get you out of here."

Where was *out*?

"You're Government," he said. "You're going to have me dissected."

"You savage! Can't you see there is no government as you understand the term? The people left in this city are incapable of rational thought. Reasoning man opted out of this city over six centuries ago! He began to leave over a thousand years ago, when he first found a machine could do his thinking for him. He made a big error then, thinking his machines were efficient, thinking that he could trust them more than he could trust himself."

"And can't he?"

"Never, Robin. Even the most complex machine, the computer, is just a sort of special fool. When men shaped themselves to fit into a computerized world, they became fools themselves, they sank back into this sort of urban savagery, this ghastly mixture of automation and ancestral skulls!"

Dazed, he groped for an answer. There was, must be an answer. He knew the necessity for ancestral skulls. They insured one's inheritance, and —

From outside, a shriek came from the drab sky, growing louder fast.

It was almost night. It was Wellpurging Night. The few clouds in the sky were dappled with the last stains of sundown. In the north, a thing with spread wings rose. It was black. It traveled unwaveringly, and slowly as if to survey every soul in the city. Two red eyes blinked down. The Dark Thing was in flight.

Robin sank to his knees. Of all the people in the city, he was the one it was after. He had transgressed the most. His heart struggled to break free and rise up to that shape of retribution.

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She was tugging his hair and crying to him to get up, smacking his face, twisting his ear, crying. In pain, he hit back, grasped her round the legs, buried his face in her warm thigh. She fell on top of him.

She was half-laughing.

"Get up, you great savage! Come on, I'll take you out of here — away from the city."

He was sober at once. He rose and helped her to her feet.

"I want to get out of the city," he said. It was all he had ever wanted — and it had taken him till now to realize it.

As the Dark Thing shrieked overhead — there were cries from the streets to mark its passage; people would be dying out there — they hurried into the gloom of the passage. A man stood there with a gun.

He flashed a torch in their eyes and they came to a shocked halt.

"I've been listening to everything you said." His voice was less steady than his gun. "You are both guilty of crime talk. I saw you in the canteen, young H. I saw you through this window when you put your light on. I know just what you are up to."

Robin recognized the sad and baggy face.

"Ovine!" he exclaimed.

"O to you, thanks. I still believe in the law, if you don't. Miss L, you must take me with you, out of the city. I want to get away from here. Take me with you or I'll shoot you both and swear it was my duty."

"Turn your torch off," she ordered. Her voice was calm. "You can't come, Ovine. Resign yourself to the fact."

In a humble voice he said, "I can't bear this GIB job, Miss L. I'm no good at it. It's been in my family over four centuries, but I'm just a failure. Wherever I go to investigate, they always discover me. I'm an outcast. I'm always chased and beaten. I can't —"

Robin's blow caught him in the midriff. He doubled up, dropping the torch and slipping to the floor.

Gina seized Robin's arm and led him along the corridor. "My big brave savage!" she murmured.

"You were pretty calm, weren't you?"

"Yes. I happened to know that that gun of his was an old family heirloom, but he had no — shots, or whatever the word is. No fuel for it. Gun fuel isn't available any more."

They came out of the building. Distantly down the avenue a bonfire burned. Figures danced round it and there was some shouting. The lights of the

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canteen burned; silhouetted by them was a knot of men. Robin held the girl back. He recognized some of the men. His father was there.

"I gave my address away to them by eating in the canteen," he whispered. "They aren't looking this way. Can we get round the back?"

They investigated a side alley running between the GIB building and the next. It led nowhere. As they worked their way back, Ovine emerged from the building, still clutching his stomach, and staggered out into the road. A cry went up from the group of men as they recognized him.

Ovine turned and ran down the avenue towards the bonfire. With whoops and shrieks, the others gave chase. Sam Hedging and Claysbank were in the lead. Taking advantage of the distraction, Robin and Gina hurried onto the trafficway and jumped aboard a tram.

After a silence, he said, "You must have known Ovine well."

"No. I told you, I was not permanent there. One day you'll understand the hopelessness of the network of this city's life. The GIB was carrying out an investigation to find how many men in DP2 are redundant. Ovine — had all gone well — would have made his report. You would all have been declared redundant, but nothing would have happened. The report would have been filed in the entrails of some idiotic machine — and next generation the work would have been done all over again, just as it was last generation by Ovine's father, and the generation before that by his grandfather. You see, the GIB itself is redundant!"

"But then —"

"All humans in the city are redundant. They've got no meaning and no purpose. The machines just find them little jobs to keep 'em quiet."

VI

When they got off the bus, she led the way to a nearby door.

"Is this a trap, Gina?"

She opened the front door impatiently, stepping aside to let him in before her.

"You'd better come in and see."

Annoyed with himself for doubting her, he walked in. Heavy padded hands came up and grasped his head.

In the dark he fought with fear and fury. But the thing was of metal that held him, and had more than one pair of hands. In no time he was hamstrung. They were in utter dark, and then a light filled his eyes. The robo

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was revealed in outline for a brief second, as a writhing illumination covered it. It relaxed its grip on Robin and fell.

"I'm terribly sorry about that," Gina said, clinging to him. "I should have guessed that they'd get after me as well as you when your mother was discovered. I've been careless. Since the mindless fools were expecting only me, they sent only one robofficer for me. We'd better move before more come."

"What did you do to him?" Robin asked as they stepped over the metal hulk.

"A sort of gun that really works. They don't make them in this city. But they do where I come from."

"Hag's sake, Gina, where do you come from?"

"Where we're going to, fast!"

In the kitchen, she shut the door and switched on the light, grumbling because the windows of the city did not have curtains.

Outside, with its blood-separating screech, the Dark Thing sailed over again. It was close, but Robin paid no attention. Gina was opening up her refuse well. Behind the disposal chute, the regulation pattern had been altered. The rotor that mashed the refuse as it went down had been removed. A metal ladder hung into the depths. Inside the door, a torch dangled. Gina took it and climbed through the hatch onto the ladder.

"Follow me, and be sure to close the hatch behind you. There's a stout bolt on this side."

"What are we going down into the Services for?"

"Oh, hurry, Robin, hurry!"

Reluctantly, he climbed into the well. As he did so, there came a knocking at the front door of the house, a knocking that changed into a pounding. As he slammed the hatch to, he heard a door panel splinter. He climbed hurriedly down into the depths, preceded by the jigging circle of Gina's torchlight.

They climbed for a long while. He wondered what had happened to the Services, and realized that the concrete beyond the ladder was new; they had bypassed the Services level. They could only be going to one place.

"Steady now," she cautioned.

He came down and stood beside her as she fumbled with a lock.

"Wait a moment," he said, grasping her hand. She turned to see his face shining with sweat. His chest heaved as he forced the words out, "I know where we are — it's the ground outside, isn't it? I can't go out there. I'll see you out, then I'll go back upstairs to face — "

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She broke in, "I can't leave you now. Get a grip of yourself and come on."

"No, you don't understand! It may be true, all you say about our having been taught a lot of superstition, but you don't just throw off a lifetime's habit in one go."

"You do if you're determined enough. Listen, even today the centuries when man was a creature living on the edge of endless forests and jungles is not far enough behind him. We never managed to throw off the superstitions of those times before we took to building our own jungle-substitutes, the cities. So as well as being centers of civilization, they've always been centers of ignorance and fear as well. The greatest cities in the world have sheltered more savages than savants. This city has no savants! It's a stone and steel jungle, and you're a savage. Choose! Are you going back into the trees or out into the light with me?"

As he stood there, a series of blows sounded from above their heads. The robos were breaking in the kitchen hatch.

Robin laughed hoarsely. "It seems I'm on your side."

Distantly over their heads, a light showed. He knew then how far they had climbed. They would be on the ground now... A searchlight flashed on from above; at the same time, Gina had the lock open and they tumbled out into darkness.

When vision returned to his eyes, Robin saw they were indeed on the ground.

It was not as he had imagined it. The dark made it a terrifying world in two tones of black. Massive pillars and struts and cross girders bit a confusing pattern out of the sky. They stumbled over uneven ground littered with stone and the occasional trench. A wind blew, hooking bits of paper out of the shadow and back, in a lunatic chase. Robin thought of the white things he had seen moving from Dunshinnan Bridge. Instinctively he looked up. The black monster of the city crouched over them, huge and cruel and senseless as an ancient curse.

He tripped and fell.

"I've got a half-track parked where it's smoother," Gina said. "Don't keep falling over."

He had hurt his shin and was angry. Broken ground was a new experience.

"Why don't you put your damned torch on?"

"Because there's someone or something ahead."

They moved round a massive leg of metal. Out in the open, crouched on the rough ground, was a machine, with two robos

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near it. Gradually, the two humans distinguished between shadow and substance. Robin felt his legs shake.

"It's the Dark Thing!" he whispered. There it lay, its red eyes closed.

"They're waiting till it's time to do another circuit of the city. And they're in our way. Oh, Robin, and I've got lost... I can't remember where I parked the half-track. Perhaps it was the other side. All this darkness — it's so confusing!"

She began to weep. He held her, confused and yet gratified by her weakness. Her sobs sounded horribly loud. He stared out at the Dark Thing with a dry mouth, watching to see if the robos had heard anything. Then a stab of light from behind made him turn.

The pursuit had climbed down the well from Gina's house and was looking for them. One, two, three heavy robos appeared, flashing their lights among the superstructure of city supports.

The robos by the Dark Thing began signalling and calling to the newcomers. There was a swift exchange of calls, and they began to join forces. Making a dash for it, Gina and Robin jumped behind a buttress. A shout rose as they went.

"They've seen us! We'll never get away," Gina said.

"Wait!" He looked cautiously round the buttress. The robos had their backs turned. Their lights shone through a maze of girders onto a vehicle. He pulled Gina up. "That's what they're shouting about. Is that your car?"

She nodded.

"There's a chance, Robin. Follow me."

She was running out into the open. He followed without hesitation; he had to be with her. They ran out towards the Dark Thing.

He was not afraid. If robos worked it, it was another machine.

It was bigger than he had expected. They pulled up together, sheltered under one wing from the robos now examining her vehicle.

"Can you work this thing?" he asked. It was half a prayer.

"Now's my chance to learn."

"Good girl!"

They scrambled into a roomy cabin, sat on unpadded seats before a control board that meant nothing to him. She worked switches. Lights came on. Motors roared, died, burst into full life.

"Hold tight!" she called, but they were already tipping upwards. He caught a last glimpse of their pursuers, galloping out towards them. Horribly near,

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the lip of the city came up, black and ponderous, then they saw the city itself, canting at an angle, a tangle of light and dark, a smaller place than he knew, a place it was very easy to escape from.

She was laughing, and he enjoyed the sight of it.

Above the noise, she shouted, "One last scare for them — I can't switch the banshee siren off!"

"Why do they need all this spook apparatus?" he yelled. "If they don't want man, why don't they — just wipe him out?"

"They *need* men! They *need* us, Robin! They can't do without us the way we can do without them. We may be redundant in the city, but in the world, *they* are redundant. You shall see — we're heading for my city, where robos are back in their proper place."

She said something else more gently, so that he could not hear for the noise.

"What did you say?"

Again he missed her shouted reply. Only her smile was clear as they sped over the featureless plain, howling like a banshee all the way.

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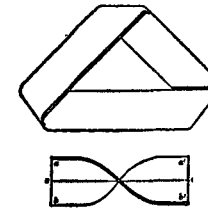

"A mathematician named Klein
Thought the Moebius band was divine.
Said he: 'If you glue
The edges of two,
You'll get a weird bottle like mine.'"

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THE WATCHERS IN THE GLADE

BY RICHARD WILSON

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

It wasn't a bad planet. The food was good — once you managed to eat it!

I

Nevins, who had been ill, did not rejoin the others for nearly two weeks after they had been cast away by the mutineers. It was dusk when he walked into the glade of flame-colored grass where they had decided to wait. Jeffries was the only one to greet him.

"Hello, Nevins," he said. "Going to be part of the happy group, are you? How's the fever?"

"Gone, I guess. But I still feel lightheaded."

Jeffries laughed. "So do we all. It's something in the atmosphere of this bloody planet. Well, pick yourself a spot. One's as good as another."

Nevins looked around. There was no hut or lean-to, or even bedding. "Where do you sleep?" he asked.

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Jeffries laughed again, with little humor. "You've been sleeping? You're the lucky one. We don't sleep, friend."

"They had me doped up. I guess I was out most of the time. You mean you *can't* sleep?"

"Can't — and don't need to," Jeffries said. "It's the atmosphere, old boy. Something in it. But nothing to knit up the old raveled sleave. Damn nuisance, of course, but there it is. We're the original lively four. Five, now you're here."

"Nobody looks very lively," Nevins said.

Cadman, who was closest to them, sat crosslegged in front of his portable typewriter, which he had propped on top of a flat rock. He was pecking at the keys with two fingers, without enthusiasm but steadily.

"Hello, Cadman," Nevins said. "Working?"

Cadman looked at him with no particular expression. "That's what Interplanetary News pays me for," he said. "I'm preparing a dispatch."

"I see. That's the spirit."

Cadman brightened a little. "Look, Ralph," he said. "You've been away. You can use a fill-in. Feel free to look over my stuff any time. It wouldn't be right for you to miss out on the story just because you've been sick."

"That's damn nice of you," Nevins said.

Jeffries said: "Code of the journalist, eh, Cadman?"

"Just the decent thing to do," Cadman said, not looking at Jeffries.

"Thanks, Cadman," Nevins said. "I'll have a look later."

"Okay." Cadman went back to typing. "There's really no hurry."

Before Jeffries led him away, Nevins had a glimpse of the line Cadman was typing. It said: *damn nice code journalist look later no hurry*

"Cadman's got it all down," Jeffries said. "Every jot and tittle. Every crashing bore of an incident. It's there for when you want it, but you won't want it. He's crackers, you know."

"Crackers?"

"Nutty as a fruit cake, to use your idiom. More so than the rest of us."

Nevins looked at him closely. "Not you," he said. "Not Justin Jeffries of the *Daily Mail,* dean of the British press corps." He'd tried to say it lightly, but it came out sounding nasty. He hadn't meant it to; Jeffries was supercilious and full of biting wit but there was no malice in him.

"The same," said Jeffries, who'd apparently taken no offense. "We've all developed our

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little ways. Just as you will, Ralph L. Nevins of Galactic News, now that you're back from limbo."

"How's Cindy? She's a pretty level-headed one."

Cindy Garth, feature writer for World Wide News, wasn't the prettiest girl in the world. Few women correspondents were externally beautiful. But Cindy was intelligent and pleasant and, before the mutiny, had been a real diplomat as lone woman in the ship. She'd earned the respect of each of her male colleagues, even those she'd had to rebuff when they tried too unsubtly to be lady-killers.

Jeffries said: "Want to talk to her now, or save it for dessert? It may come as a shock."

Ralph Nevins hesitated. He could see Cindy at the far end of the glade. She was perched on a hummock, turned half away from them, watching the sun-moon as it prepared to sink behind the dark red ridge across the little valley. She looked perfectly normal, almost pretty, in the gathering dusk. What could be wrong with her?

Nothing, Ralph decided. "Come on; let's go say hello."

Jeffries shrugged. "Hold on to your illusions."

Cindy Garth looked around sharply as they neared. She sprang to her feet.

"Hold!" she cried, flinging out an imperious arm. "None approaches save at our bidding." She glared at them. "What seek ye?"

Ralph turned to the older man in dismay. "What's happened to her?"

Cindy's hair was a tangle. She wore no makeup. Her clothing was rumpled. Nevertheless her carriage was erect and her gaze haughty.

"She's Queen of the May," Jeffries said. "Or perhaps Catherine the Great. Had enough for now?"

Yes. I'll talk to her when I'm stronger."

They turned away. Cindy went back to her hummock, muttering. It sounded as if she were saying, "... respect for our sovereign person."

As they headed back toward the center of the darkening glade Hunter, the fifth in their group, jogged past them around the perimeter. His head was flung back and his eyes appeared to be closed. He held his hands in fists, close to his chest, and trotted soundlessly around a narrow track which had been worn into the yellow-orange grass. He was breathing in a deep, controlled rhythm.

"What's he doing?" Ralph asked.

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"Working himself up to it."

"To what? I'd say hello, but he looks as if he doesn't want anybody to bother him."

"He wouldn't talk to you now. Afterwards, maybe."

"After what?"

"Let's see if we can fine you a hummock to call your own," Jeffries said. "We may not sleep, but we can't stand up all night like bloody horses, either."

The sun-moon touched the rim of the horizon and seemed to spread its softly silver luminescence along the edge of it, as if it were an egg yolk accommodating itself to the flatness of a pan. Then it was sucked under the rim, leaving the sky dark but with fiery streaks at one of the bottom edges of its inverted bowl.

Then the moon-moon rose, in almost the exact place where the sun-moon had set, and, on a far ridge between it and the glade, some figures began to move back and forth in a curious, jerky way.

They were at such a distance that it was hard to judge their size, but Ralph imagined they were about as big as wolves.

They traveled in a kind of mechanical lope, moving in one direction for several seconds, then halting with a jerk and going in the opposite way. They were little more than silhouettes at this distance, and to Ralph they looked like cookie-cutter figures being manipulated by a child in the beam of a projector. They constantly moved back and forth, crisscrossing, perhaps even swinging around one another the way people did at a barn dance.

Then another image came into Ralph's mind, that of a crack-the-whip at a carnival, where each car was sent speeding in one direction and then was whipped around as it reached the end of its mechanical tether.

But that was still not right. The word "wolves" came back into his mind, without reason.

Jeffries had paused and watched with him. "Hypnotic spectacle, isn't it? For some reason, undoubtedly psychological, everybody calls them the wolves. Yet they don't look a bit like wolves, do they?" He watched them for a while longer, then turned away and said abruptly: "Besides, there aren't any animals on this planet. Except for us."

II

They had never learned the name of the leader of the mutiny aboard the man o' war *Patton*. Nor were the correspondents able to learn the reason for it. Only two ship's officers

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were spared — Captain Brian Larcom and Lieutenant John Raney, the medics — and neither would discuss it.

The uprising had been carried out swiftly early one morning (ship's time) as the *Patton* sped in tertiary max. toward a rendezvous with the remnants of a beleaguered Earth fleet, a specified number of parsecs from Barnard's Oph.

Nevins had heard one scream. When he dragged himself out of his cabin, feverish and half asleep, a mutineer prodded him toward the lounge. The other four correspondents were already there, herded into a corner under a diorama of Paris-before-the-bomb. Even Justin Jeffries had lost some of his imperturbability, possibly due to the fact that he hadn't been allowed to dress except for a robe over his pajamas.

There had been a giddy moment as the ship came to a stop, ending the flutter-in-the-stomach of tertiary max. which they had almost come to accept as normal.

There had been some whispering among the mutineers. Then Cindy Garth screamed. She'd had a glimpse through a port of the bodies of the murdered officers, in orbit anound the *Patton.*

The apparent leader of the uprising, a gaunt, middle-aged man with a terrible scar over his left eye, spoke.

"We've got nothing against you," he said. "There's a planet on the chart where we'll drop you and the two medics who didn't want to throw in with us."

"I'll go with you," one of the correspondents said to the mutineer chief.

He was Ramsey Hunter, a lean, unfriendly war correspondent whose reputation had been made because he happened to be in the right place to dash to the Sinkiang border to report that short-lived, accidental Sino-Soviet war in which a million men and women died in three days because of a misunderstood order from either Moscow or Peking. Had it not been for Hunter, the rest of the world might never have heard about the terrible conflict. Had it not been for his dispatches, there might not have been those basic changes in east-west diplomacy which brought some sense to a world which had been on the lip of the pit of disaster.

No one knew then, of course, that soon a united Earth would face interplanetary disaster.

Hunter, who was only 28, had been hired away from his news agency and was now a rove-at-will syndicated war correspondent for Trans-Universe Fea-

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tures. He claimed he had a Chinese bullet in his left arm and a piece of Russian shrapnel in his right leg. Though he never mentioned them except in print, his scars had been plain to see when he went for a swim at Wallops Island before the *Patton* leapt away to fling itself across six light-years to the vicinity of Barnard's Oph, to fight the war of the particles.

So Ramsey Hunter naturally said to the mutineers that he would join them, in a professional capacity, of course. There would be many a column in the experience, and probably a better chance of getting back to Earth.

"No, you won't," the mutineer chief said. "We're taking our own and nobody else. This is a nice uninhabited planet we picked out for you. It's got air and everything." He had a sense of humor, of a kind, this scarred mutineer.

"But that's inhuman!" Arthur Cadman said. "Who would ever find us?"

"Nobody, maybe. On the other hand, if we get where we're going, and if we feel like it, we'll send a message to Earth and tell them where you are. If you cooperate and don't make any trouble, that is."

"I don't think we can ask for more than that," Justin Jeffries said, with a glance at the bodies circling outside against the unfamiliar sky. The mutineers could easily add five more grisly satellites. Or four more, keeping Cindy for themselves.

No, it would be best to take what was offered and to ask no questions, such as what the mutiny had been about.

"Very sensible, Mr. Jeffries," the chief mutineer told him. "Now you pioneers go back to your cabins and pack what you want to. Stay there till we let you know. It'll be a few hours yet before we get you to your new home."

The warm climate, where the temperature did not vary by a degree day or night, and the lack of rain made shelter unnecessary.

Captain Larcom and Lieutenant Raney, the medics, had built a chemical privy near the little house they put up.

The mutineers had let them have pre-formed material out of the stores. The mutineers also had left enough material for each of the correspondents to have built himself a fair-sized hut, had he wished to. But none had. Perhaps if Cindy Garth had singled out one of them there would have been some carpentry. But with the medics' toilet available to all and with Cindy gone mad,

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there was no need for building. Nothing went up in the glade.

The medics had put up their place in a smaller clearing behind a low hill and out of sight of the glade. They called it a dispensary. It actually had served as a hospital for Ralph Nevins until he recovered from his fever.

But Jeffries called it the fairy palace. He was positive that Captain Larcom and Lieutenant Raney were homosexuals and that they had built their dispensary not because they were concerned about the health of their fellow castaways but because they were the only two people on the planet who were having any kind of sexual relations.

"I have no proof," Jeffries told Ralph. "It could be just my nasty mind. You spent a fortnight there. In your lucid moments, how did they strike you?"

Ralph shrugged. "There's nothing overt about them, but there are signs, if they mean anything: the fussy way they fight with each other, for one thing."

"You don't mean physically fight?"

"No; I mean argue. It's a petty sort of contradiction — or a vying for superlatives. It's as if one of them said he had once treated a very difficult case of double pneumonia and the other had to say he'd once had a terrible case of *triple* pneumonia."

"I see. A sort of one-upmanship— over nothing."

"Over nothing important, anyway," Ralph said.

"And the kiss-and-make-up went on out of sight."

"If there was any. We're just guessing, aren't we?"

"Gossiping, I'd call it. But there's nothing much else to do, is there? Not until mealtime, anyway."

"When *is* mealtime?"

"Whenever Hunter gets back," Jeffries said.

"Back from where?"

"It's interesting how we've adjusted to eating only one meal a day. Like the family dog."

Ralph said: "This is the second time you've evaded one of my questions about what Hunter goes out for. Why?"

"Why have I evaded your question? I'll keep on evading for a while."

By then it was dark, or as dark as it ever got. Hunter, who all this time had been jogging around the track, increased his pace for a final lap, then sped away from the glade until he disappeared among the tall, toad-stool-shaped trees.

Arthur Cadman, whose typing

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had finally stopped, though earlier it had continued despite the gathering gloom;

Cindy Garth, wary-eyed and aloof, but obviously in need, now, of having people around her;

Lieutenant John Raney, a thin man, apparently in his late twenties, whose hair was rapidly turning gray;

Captain Brian Larcom, a once-trim figure in his early forties who was now beginning to bulge above the belt and below the chin; and

Justin Jeffries, who led Ralph Nevins to the center of the glade as if initiating him into a rite.

The medics arrived in single file, several feet apart, from out of the toadstool wood beyond the circular glade of grass. The glade had lost its yellow-orange daytime fire and was now the color of a steak which had lain too long in the supermarket freezer-shelf.

No one spoke. They arranged themselves on hummocks, almost ceremoniously, facing the far-off rise where the silhouetted figures persisted in their silent, tireless dance. Ralph, his questions hushed by the obvious solemnity of the occasion, sat down where Jeffries indicated he should.

The moon-moon had risen just so far over the horizon and hovered there, concentrically ringed, like a thin onion-slice in the dark sky.

The far-off stage was filled with ever-changing shapes. Occasionally, although the movements of the figures had to be purely random, Ralph was tempted to ascribe rational motives to them.

Even as a dedicated sky-watcher must inevitably find meaning in a cloud-shape, so did Ralph find significance in the motions of these others with whom he and his fellow castaways shared the planet.

And as they watched — intent, involved, apprehensive, fearful — a new figure appeared at the left of the double-moon-illuminated stage. It was Ramsey Hunter, instantly recognizable. But then, as Hunter's presence made itself felt, the movements of the others on the stage, heretofore calm and ordered, if swift, became frenzied and frantic, as if menace had entered from the wings.

Then Ralph noticed Cindy. As Hunter joined the group across the valley and became one of the silhouettes, Cindy became less aloof. Her hands began to flutter, to her hair, to her face, to her breast.

Cadman, who was sitting near Cindy, watched her with concern. He moved closer and then,

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tentatively, fearfully, not looking at her, he stretched out a hand to her, ready to withdraw it instantly if it were rebuffed.

But it was not rebuffed. It was ignored for a time; then Cindy reached out, without looking, and grasped Cadman's hand and clung to it as she watched the distant tableau.

Ralph looked away to the others. Larcom and Raney, who had entered the glade so conspicuously apart, were sitting on a hummock. As Hunter appeared on the ridge they moved closer together, as if in fear. Then slowly, unconsciously perhaps, Larcom's right hand reached out and gripped Raney's left and they clung to each other, their eyes fixed on the drama being enacted on the far ridge.

Justin Jeffries, having brought Ralph to the center, sat apart from him. Jeffries watched as intently as any of the others, but seemingly without the need for another's support. Yet toward the end of the drama he too had become tensely involved. As he watched, his right hand made a fist and slowly bored into his left palm.

Ralph, not knowing what any of this meant, was less personally involved, though the obvious emotion of the others was affecting him. His realization that the others were being so profoundly moved made him seek harder for clues to what was really happening on the ridge where Ramsey Hunter and the other silhouetted creatures were acting out their macabre ballet.

Those others on the stage-like ridge now drew away from Hunter as if he were contaminated. It was as if those who approached Hunter from the right did so with the greatest reluctance. But approach they must, Ralph thought, because they were on a treadmill. No, not so much a treadmill as one of those little hand-cranked merry-go-rounds you used to see in the city, on the back of a truck, where the horses and swans and ostriches moved with stroboscopic haltingness both from left to right and right to left. All that was lacking was the music, the imitation-calliope sound.

While the figures approaching Hunter did so haltingly— fearfully? — those fleeing from him went in a wild plunge, as if strung on elastic, almost as if exultant at having been spared.

The weird dance became even more frenzied. It must have been Ralph's delusion but Hunter, the hunter, had become shrunken and had assumed the shape of a wolf. Or had he merely dropped down on all fours?

But at the same time the oth-

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ers — the hunter's prey — became human-shaped. Their scissorwork outlines took on the forms of full, rounded men and women. They grew arms and legs of the most astonishing realism. With the legs they sought hopelessly to run from this alien creature intent on their destruction.

But their legs were chained to the eternally revolving central mechanism. There was nowhere they could go except to cower away from their hunter as they were drawn toward him and then to fling themselves away as soon as they were able.

With their arms they gestured to each other and to their foe, making plain their fear and disgust. They did not hold each other's hands nor did they strike out against the wolf-shape of the hunter who menaced them. Their arms appeared designed less for offense or self-defense than to express their otherwise unvoicable emotions — their terror at being attacked by this alien creature.

The faces of the hunted could not be distinguished, but there was enough in the way they turned their heads, this way or that, or held them at an angle, to persuade Ralph that only intelligence could have directed such movements.

It was appalling to watch, therefore, as the wolf-shaped creature Ralph knew to be a human being crept ever closer to the terrified pack of tethered human-seeming beings.

The tableau became a silent crescendo of agonized movement as the hunter reached slowly into their midst and came away with the one he had chosen.

III

It had been done so quickly, after the ritualistic preliminary, that Ralph almost missed it. He had expected to see Hunter re-assume human form and strike with a knife, with a dramatic upflung and downthrust arm. But Hunter attacked from near the ground and used no weapon that Ralph could see.

The one taken from the midst of the others threw up its arms in one final hopeless gesture. Its head went back on its neck in a silent scream of despair. Then it withered. It simply collapsed and was borne away across the shoulder of the man who had now risen to his full human height.

A great sigh, whether of relief or shame Ralph could not tell, rose from the watchers in the glade. Ralph himself felt chiefly release from tension. The others had not sighed in unison, but each individual sigh had been of

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such duration that at one point they had blended into a unified expression of group emotion.

As the hunter left the distant stage with his kill the dancers on that knoll returned to the measured round in which they had been peacefully engaged before the stranger joined the scene.

Now that this act of the drama had ended, those in the glade drew apart. Cindy Garth dropped Arthur Cadman's hand with an expression of distaste and retired to a separate hummock. Cadman looked after her for a moment, then took a small notebook from his pocket and began to write busily, bending close to the page so he could see in the dimness.

Larcom and Raney unclasped hands and self-consciously withdrew to opposite sides of the same hummock, where each sat stiffly upright.

Justin Jeffries, the cool one, stopped turning his fist in palm and stood up, thrusting hands into pants pockets. He looked at Ralph, who shook his head and gave a smile of no meaning.

Jeffries walked to Ralph's hummock. He said with forced lightness: "What do you think of our amateur theatricals?"

Ralph, putting his voice together, said: "You sound like the actor who asked Mrs. Lincoln how she liked the show. I thought it was horrible, of course."

He saw Cadman cock an ear toward them, then write in his notebook, nose almost touching a page. Ralph could image him putting down: *Lincoln theater horrible of course...*

"Of course," Jeffries said. "But fascinating, too, you must admit. You wouldn't think the same routine could hold an audience night after night, but it does. The same audience, needless to say."

"You mean it's always Hunter who goes out?"

"He's a volunteer. Never mind now. Here comes the killer with his kill."

Hunter strode into the glade with some awful thing over his shoulder.

Ramsey Hunter, chronicler of wars, castaway of fate, killer of aliens, strode into the glade with a confident step and a proud bearing. He went directly to Cindy Garth and kneeled before her.

"I have returned, O my Queen, with food for your subjects," he said. His expression was a mixture of haughtiness and mock servility, overshadowed by a look which laughed at everyone and everything.

Cindy ignored the look, if she

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saw it, and stood. She stretched out a tentative hand which did not quite touch Hunter on the forehead. "Rise, mighty hunter," she said. "Thou hast done well."

Hunter rose and tossed down the thing he had been carrying.

Ralph didn't know what he had expected — perhaps a clatter of skeletal bones or the thud of a body. What he heard was the faintest rustle, as if Hunter had dropped an autumn cornstalk. And when he looked he saw a leafy bundle, a sheaf, hose plucking would have been no more traumatic than the picking of an apple.

"Will Your Highness honor me by accepting the first of the servings?" Hunter asked.

"We accept," Cindy said and, Hunter leaned down and broke off a piece. It was about as long as a leg of lamb and not quite as thick.

Cindy grabbed it out of his hand and ran to her place at the edge of the glade, calling over her shoulder: "Serve the others, mighty hunter, and thyself."

Hunter reached down again and broke off a piece which he put in his pocket. Then he beckoned to the medics, who seemed the most eager to be fed. Cindy had seemed more eager to leave them than to eat.

Larcom and Raney accepted the portion Hunter tore off for them, then went off beyond the glade to their infirmary (or fairy palace), Larcom first and Raney carrying the food. No words were exchanged.

Cadman was the next to go up. Hunter, a benevolent smile on his lips, waited for him to approach. Ralph, watching, thought of Hunter as heir apparent and wondered how he would treat poor Cadman as he claimed his pound of grain, or whatever the stuff was that lay, inert, on the ground.

To Ralph's surprise, Hunter (Hunter the hunter, dispenser of life) treated Cadman very decently. "How are you, Cadman?" he said. "Everything all right?"

"Fine, Hunter," Cadman said. "I'm keeping it up to date."

"That's the way," Hunter said. "Take some chow so you'll have the strength for it." He put a piece in Cadman's pocket. "Here, have another little something for later, in case you get bogged down in the middle of the night while you're doing the history. It's amazing how a little something to nibble on stimulates the creative juices."

"Thank you," Cadman said gravely. "Having been a writer yourself, Hunter, you understand our problems. I appreciate that."

"Quite," Hunter said, equally

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grave. "Carry on, Cadman, and remember the old precept: Never mind the facts, but be sure you spell the names right." He kept an absolutely straight face.

A little frown appeared on Cadman's forehead. He said: "Forgive me for asking, but is it Hunter with a capital H or is it small-h hunter? I mean in the generic sense. I do get confused."

And Hunter said, again more kindly than Ralph would have expected: "It depends entirely on your point of view, Arthur. You're the historian; you're Herodotus, you're Toynbee. And the historian is the referee. Call 'em as you see 'em, Arthur, and damn the dissenters."

Cadman, his notebook out, as busy recording it all, his face close to the paper, as he backed away from Hunter, the man on the Queen's hummock; Hunter, the acting chief.

Then it was Justin Jeffries' turn. Jeffries went with a combination of bravado and subservience, a mingling of defiance and dependence. He said: "Hail, Chief. Congratulations on a successful hunt. What can I, your humble servant, do for you?"

Hunter regarded him coldly. "You can hunt in my place tomorrow night. How would that suit you, wise guy?"

"Perfectly," Jeffries replied. "I've offered before, you remember, but you've never accepted."

"You'd willing go?" Hunter asked, as if in disbelief. "You'd risk the perils, the psychic terrors?"

"Ah, bull," Jeffries said. "It's not so terrible as all that. I particularly want to put my offer on the record because we have a new arrival today: Ralph Nevins."

"I am glad to welcome him," Hunter said. "Out of courtesy to him I overlook all the ways you have attempted to subvert my authority and belittle my achievement."

Ralph, who had drawn close to the two, said: "Surely Hunter hasn't forgotten that we were all together aboard the *Patton*."

"I'm afraid he has," Jeffries replied under his breath. "He's completely absorbed in this heroic drama he's playing. Try him out if you like."

"I will." Ralph thought for a moment while Hunter stared coldly at Jeffries. Then he said: "Hunter, what do you plan to do when the rescue ship comes?"

Hunter went into the first person plural, as if Cindy no longer existed, and said: "Our fealty is to our subjects. Naturally we shall stay here with them."

Jeffries put left ear to left shoulder and rolled his eyeballs

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up as if to say: You see? Completely mad.

"Enough of this empty talk," Hunter said. "Here is your share, Jeffries, and yours, Nevins. Now get thee hence, that the hunter may enjoy what is left to himself, before the great sleep descends."

Ralph watched Hunter detach a piece which he handed to Jeffries. He gave another to Ralph and stuffed what was left under his arm and loped off to the edge of the glade, halfway between Cindy and Cadman.

Ralph told Jeffries: "He talks like a cross between the King James version and Edgar Rice Burroughs."

"Really?" Jeffries said with a minimum of interest now that dinner had been served. "I'm hungry, so I suggest you go and eat, privately, while I do the same. Don't be self-conscious. No one will watch."

As Ralph hesitated. Jeffries, though, obviously anxious to go, took the time to say: "What you've got to understand is that they're vegetables."

"I know that, I suppose."

"Well, you have no compunctions about digging up a potato, have you? And then plucking out its eyes and boiling it in water, or baking it in its skin, and then eating it? Same thing. Only these are mobile vegetables."

"But they're shaped like people."

"So's a gingerbread man. You've got to be realistic. The only other stuff that grows here is impossible. It has no nourishment and it makes you sick."

"Maybe we could build up an immunity to it."

"Don't think we haven't tried. It's like eating a poison ivy salad."

Saying no more, Jeffries went off to his own hummock, clutching the meal that Hunter had given him.

Ralph, after a moment's hesitation, took his share and went to his own place, near the perimeter.

There, sitting beside his hummock, which so accommodatingly fitted its edge to the back of his neck, Ralph examined his ration.

It was less ominous than he had feared. There was nothing about it that was the least like flesh. Relieved, Ralph broke off a piece. It caused him no more pain than it would to snap a bread stick.

It was crisp, like celery. It had separated cleanly, with no bleeding or any other indication that it might once have been flesh. Grateful for this, Ralph looked to see what the others were doing.

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Cindy Garth was eating as if there might never be tomorrow, cramming food into her mouth in an orgy of self-gratification. Ralph stared at her for a time but she either did not see him or chose to ignore him.

His gaze went next to Arthur Cadman, the fortunate one who had held the Queen's hand and who had been spoken civilly to by Hunter. But Cadman was even less responsive. He had eyes for nothing but his journal. He wrote steadily, a pencil in his right hand and his eyes close to the page, his left hand only occasionally bringing a bite of supper to his mouth.

Ralph looked next to Jeffries, a dozen feet away. Jeffries, former man-about-London, sophisticate, sometimes adviser of prime ministers, was so engrossed in his meal that Ralph, shocked, looked away quickly. At the moment there was nothing to be learned from Jeffries except gluttony.

Ralph turned finally to study the hunter himself, Ramsey Hunter.

Hunter was eating like a gourmet, choosing a bit of this, a trifle of that, wiping his lips with a handkerchief and then nibbling again, unhurriedly. It was a bravura performance, like his earlier one on the knoll across the valley, none the less polished now that Ralph Nevins was the sole member of the audience.

But then, for no apparent reason, Hunter clutched his belly, groaned and ran. Like anyone who is about to vomit, he headed away from his fellow creatures. He went a little beyond the perimeter and stood there, facing out from them, his body heaving as his stomach worked to rid itself of that which offended it.

To Ralph, who had not yet eaten, this was a discouraging sight. If the great hunter could not stomach his own provender, who else could be expected to?

Suddenly Ralph had no appetite. He took his share to Cadman. (His first impulse had been to go to Jeffries, but Jeffries' gluttony had disgusted him.) Cadman looked up from his notebook and said: "Thanks."

"Does Hunter always get sick like that?" Ralph asked.

"Always when it's his turn."

"You mean others have been out? Hunter talked as if he was the only one."

"Oh, no," Cadman said; "we've all been out. Hunter's just going through one of his heroic moods. Then it'll be up to Jeffries or me — or you." He smiled at Ralph. "You thought I was crazy, didn't you? I suppose

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I am, in a way. But not as crazy as some. Poor Cindy, for instance, is worse off by far. And Jeffries — I really feel sorry for him. He can't eat at all when he's the hunter and he tries to make up for it by stuffing himself when somebody else has gone out."

Ralph looked at Cadman through new eyes. "*You've* been out?" he said. "By yourself?"

"Certainly," Cadman said. "I told you. We've all been out — all except Cindy, and even she said she wanted to but we wouldn't let her."

"The medics, too? Have they gone?"

Cadman smiled. "Yes, in tandem."

Ralph considered this new information. Then he said: "Could you eat afterwards, when you'd been out?"

"Only when I wasn't noticing," Cadman said. "If I was engrossed in my journal, and eating was secondary, yes. Only once, when it was so dark I couldn't write at all and when eating became a conscious thing —then I couldn't."

"I can't eat now," Ralph said.

"Oh, you must. You'll need your strength."

"I keep seeing them up there, like people, terrified of Hunter."

"Lots of vegetables move," Cadman said. "Try to bear that in mind. You've seen waving wheat and Mexican jumping beans. You've seen a willow tree in a windstorm, shaking its skirt like a hula dancer. Didn't you ever see an aspen shimmer in the slightest breeze, like a woman in sequins in a spotlight? Here, take this and go on back to your hummock and try. No one will watch you. It's a sort of unwritten rule."

Ralph was touched by Cadman's concern. After a moment he said: "Thanks; I'll try. I shouldn't have stared at you and the rest, should I? I'm sorry."

"That's all right. Go ahead and eat. I have a lot of writing to do. I especially want to get down my little speech to you — the one about the moving vegetables — before I forget it. Forgive my vanity."

Ralph went back to his hummock and, resolutely thinking of gingerbread men and Mexican jumping beans, managed to eat a little. Then he must have dozed, back of neck comfortably against hummock's edge, because when he next noticed the sun-sun had joined the sun-moon in the sky.

IV

In the bright, hard light the knoll where the drama had taken place was like any small

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hilltop, and the creatures which had been hunted were about as lively as a cornfield.

Ralph's companions sat on or lay against their hummocks in a seeming stupor, except Cadman, who was writing. Cadman was almost always writing.

Ralph stood up, then staggered as he tried to walk. He was weak, like any hospital patient who had been on his back for a long time. He knew then, as well as if one of the medics had explained it to him, that he needed food. He felt himself toppling and guided his fall toward the little pile of food Cadman had persuaded him to keep and to try to eat.

Lying on his left side where he had gone down (none of the others had made the slightest effort to help him, Ralph reached for one of the food pieces. But even before he brought it to his mouth he realized he couldn't eat it. It was not that there was anything psychologically wrong, as there had been last night; now the stuff was literally inedible. He could no more have got nourishment from the thing he was holding than he could have got marrow from a stone.

Feebly, he threw it away. It bounced toward Jeffries, who finally looked up, rousing himself from his torpor.

"You have to eat it while it's fresh," Jeffries said, as if everybody should have known that. "All the good goes out of it overnight."

"I feel weak."

"You should have eaten last night. Last night it had the crunchiness of celery, the juiciness of good rare steak, the crumbly consistency of cheese. I enjoyed it. Mad or not, Hunter gave me a particularly fine piece. But today it would be like eating an old cowflop."

"I'm hungry," Ralph said. "Isn't there anything else I could eat?"

Jeffries shrugged. "Poison ivy salad."

"If I had the strength I'd drag myself over to the ridge and cut myself a fresh piece. I don't think it's as traumatic an experience as Hunter made out."

Jeffries shrugged again. He looked bored with Ralph's troubles. "Suit yourself."

"I suppose I've got to go." Ralph tried a jest: "I can't sit around starving until the next safari leaves, can I?"

"It's your stomach," Jeffries said, vastly uninterested. He leaned back against his hummock and closed his eyes.

Hating him suddenly, Ralph got to his knees, then stood erect and, carefully putting one foot ahead of the other, started out of the glade toward the far ridge

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where the vegetation stood motionless under the brilliant sky.

Ralph felt a bright light inside his skull. Although there was a visual impression of great heat the temperature was no higher than it had been the previous night. He was not perspiring. But there was no breath of motion to the air, and the unfiltered light hurt his eyes so that he had to close them to slits. The glare also seemed to focus on his brain, cooking it without heat.

He envied the others their torpor and their full bellies. Well, the sooner he got to the ridge and cut himself a meal, the sooner he'd be able to lounge against his own hummock and wait for it to be a more bearable time of day.

Ralph stopped at the medics' to borrow a machete. No one answered his call, so he helped himself to the heavy jungle knife which hung outside and went on through the wood.

The toadstool - shaped, umber-colored trees gave some relief from the stabbing light, but the glare was so much more intense when there were gaps between the tall trees that it seemed almost worse to have had their random protection.

His brain cooking, Ralph could understand why the food gathering took place after the sun-sun had set.

Step by dogged step he brought himself to the base of the ridge where the crop, or whatever it was, grew. It stood there in stalks, like a dusty corn field, yellowy-tan, silent, unmoving.

In a final burst of forced energy, Ralph went up the rise and cut a single stalk.

His machete sliced through it effortlessly. There was no excitement or danger, as there had seemed to be when Hunter was here last night.

Nobody, nothing, grimaced at Ralph, or threw up his-her-its hands in despair.

Nobody, nothing, screamed; or opened a mouth (or anything like a mouth) to scream, silently or otherwise.

It was dull, in fact. He felt a little disappointed because there had been no dashing back and forth of humanoid plants, no mystery or drama. Each of the other faded-tan stalks had drooped dutifully, dully in its place while he cut down its brother.

The stuff didn't even wave, as wheat was said to do. It certainly hadn't waved at Ralph, either with affection or fear.

Giddy because of his hunger and the piercing light in his skull but pleased with himself,

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Ralph looked across the valley to the glade where his fellow castaways sat or lay, locked in ennui. They had certainly made a big problem out of this harvesting, this bringing in of the sheaves.

He couldn't make out the expressions on their faces, but all of them seemed to be watching him. Hunter particularly (mighty hunter, indeed!) seemed to have an intent eye on him.

Having gained strength from his triumph, Ralph decided it would be possible to return to the glade with his stalk intact and eat it there — perhaps even to make the magnanimous gesture of offering some to Hunter. This thought buoyed him up so that the trip back took much less time than his outward journey.

The sun-sun had passed its zenith before his return. His fellow castaways seemed to gain strength as the brightness faded and they left their hummocks to greet him. Even Larcom and Raney had come to the glade from their self-imposed segregation.

Ralph, so elated by this reception that he felt he could postpone eating almost indefinitely, tossed his trophy to the ground. It fell with a tiny rustling noise.

Hunter looked down at it, then at Ralph. "Back with your kill, are you, Nevins?" he asked sardonically.

Ralph replied modestly: "Oh, I wouldn't call it a 'kill.' It wasn't all that hard."

"Was it easy?" Jeffries asked.

"Well, I did what I had to do. It *was* easy, frankly, and not at all traumatic."

"So much so," Hunter said with a sneer, "that you don't see what all the fuss was about, do you? Isn't that right?"

"Oh, I think I can understand how the ritual came to be built up," Ralph said, smiling despite a sudden new pang of hunger (he could hold out a few minutes longer, anyway.) "I guess after I've been out here in the glade as long as you have, I'll welcome some sort of diversion too. Some kind of—"

"Amateur dramatics?" Hunter asked. "Group theatricals?"

"That's it, of course," Ralph said recklessly. "A kind of community pageant to relieve the tedium, with everyone playing his assigned role—"

Ralph's voice trailed off as Cindy Garth came forward. The others stepped aside for her. She looked much better. Last night she had been mad; but now she was angry. "Just let me say something to him while I'm rational," Cindy said.

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"Go ahead, Cindy," Cadman said.

Captain Larcom said: "Don't excite yourself, Cindy. It's not worth it."

Cindy said to Ralph: "You're new here and we can forgive that." It wasn't the royal "we" she was using now. "Of course we were all together aboard the *Patton* and that should count for something, but these past two weeks when you were safely tucked away in the infirmary sometimes seem more like two years. We've all gone crazy in different ways, Nevins, and some more than others. You'll find your own peculiar mania in a day or two, I'm sure. In the meantime give us credit for having a small residue of common sense. We do what we have to do — a few of us a little more strenuously than necessary — but we're all human beings and we've all adjusted to this impossible planet the way we've had to. So stop feeling superior to Hunter because you went out in the midday sun. Things are not what they seem, especially in the euphoric noon. Nobody's going to eat your pathetic little offering. Not even you."

Ralph met their various glances, then dropped his gaze to his dry stalk. "Why not?" he asked hopelessly, already knowing the answer. "What's wrong with it?"

"Try it and see," Cindy said softly.

With his triumph turned to straw, Ralph's hunger could no longer be denied. Finally, embarrassed and in gnawing pain, he tried it. There was no nourishment in it. No juice or even moisture in the silly little stalk he had bravely harvested and brought back to gloat over. It was simply a dried hulk, like a cornstalk from last year's mulch pile. He spat out the tasteless, powdery thing.

"Sorry," Cindy said. She added, ever so rationally: "I suppose somebody should have told you the juices leave the stalk in daylight. The moisture that makes the plant edible hides in the roots until the sun-sun goes down."

V

Night finally came and he was able to go out again. His hunger had become a gnawing ache, punctuated by an occasional stabbing pang. Ralph had taken Hunter's advice on how to alleviate it by jogging around the perimeter, as all true hunters were alleged to do.

The monotonous, jarring of feet on earth (Earth! — would he ever see it again?) had made the time pass faster and had even taken his mind off his hunger a

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little. It had also numbed his mind, but again only a little.

Because the waiting for night had been hard, they took compassion on him to the extent of talking to him now and then. As he jogged he remembered disjointed random fragments:

Hunter saying: "Let me assure you that there's not one unnecessary move in this nightly performance. In the first place it *has* to be every night. You found out for yourself that the stuff won't keep through the heat of the day..."

Jog, jog, jog.

Somebody (himself?) saying: "Grant me that you consider murder an odious occupation."

Thud of heels on packed earth. (Earth? No.)

Somebody else: "Murder, yes; but not picking vegetables."

Ignore the pangs. Jog. Thud.

Himself?: "Tell me what you consider murder to be."

Thud. Jog. Pang, pang.

Another: "The destruction of a thinking being, I suppose."

Head back, breathe deeply of the still air. Jog, jog.

Cindy Garth (listen, now; listen to Cindy; Cindy knows): "We have communicated with them, though we know not how. A queenly gift of second sight? Telepathy? No matter; they are thinking beings." (Cindy was mad again. Still, everyone was listening respectfully as if she told a truth they knew.) "We know them well. They are friendly, compatible, intelligent; lovable, even. They have been, at times, evocative to us of old friends, family, lovers..."

Cadman: "I had a Bunk Johnson record that I used to play all the time. It was my grandfather's. It was *You Always Hurt the One you Love.*"

Himself?: "That's all right; I'm a vegetarian."

Hunter: "Is that your bad joke for today, cannibal?"

Who?: "We were all cannibals once. That's the kind of business we were in. We stole each other's stories and copied each other's leads. We bribed and spied to cultivate a new source, preferably one 'close to the presidential palace' or 'acquainted with the Leader's thinking,' in our journalistic jargon, and then we fed on each other's sources until they'd been milked dry and discarded for more sensational ones. Too often we were less interested in writing the truth (which might just explode under everybody, us included) than we were in promulgating a government line or in helping an obscure department send up a trial balloon which quite often was shot down the following day. Knowingly abetting this, we were immoral,

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we were savages, we were cannibals."

Joggity jog-jog. Words, only words. They had no meaning to match that of hunger.

Another (Cadman?): "At least we're honest cannibals now. We kill our fellow thinkers only that we may keep alive. *If* they think. There once was a paper in New York — remember New York? — that called itself 'The Paper for People who Think.' It was a Hearst paper and when it wanted to emphasize a word or a phrase in an editorial it printed it all in capital letters. It's critics called it 'The Paper for People who Think They Think.' So maybe *we* only think they think — I mean maybe we only *think* they think. At least — let me see if I can think this through — I'd like to think we only think they think. What do you think?"

And Cindy said: "If you think about it long enough you go crazy. If you think about *anything* long enough you go crazy. We — I went crazy, thinking. I haven't come back yet."

And Hunter said: "Shut up, Cindy. It's hard enough without you reminding us all."

And Cindy: "But when I do come back I'll comb my hair and put on makeup and maybe somebody, not noticing that I'm a cannibal, will dance with me. I won't think then; I'll just dream."

Hunter: "Shut *up*, Cindy."

Thud, thud. Jog, jog. The vibrations jarring through his body were almost as good as food. (What a lie!) This way he could stand it (he told himself). As he jogged around the track, head back, fists clenched, he remembered Cadman trying to persuade Cindy to let him (Ralph) have some of the emergency ration — the food he had been fed in the hospital. There couldn't have been much of it but he found it hard to understand Cindy's flat refusal. "Nevins isn't going to starve to death in the next couple of hours," she had said. "And he'll learn a lesson."

He (Ralph) was learning it. He was Ralph. He was Nevins. He was (full name now Ralph Leslie Nevins. Oh, yes, he (you know who) was learning a good lesson. He was learning to hate them all, the bastards. Bastards and a bitch. Cindy Bitch-Queen Garth, who wouldn't let him have the ration. Justin Bastard Jeffries, who had let him go out under the sun-sun, sadistically knowing he was making a futile trip. He hated Jeffries worse.

He had wanted to go early but they explained (some of them reasonably, some shouting an-

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grily) that it would do no good to cut a stalk until the juices had returned to it from the roots. Hadn't he learned that? Ralph had said he would dig the roots (he was in pain, starving, famished; it was impossible to bear) but they explained (as to a child, some of them, but others in disgust because he didn't know what they knew) that when the roots were disturbed the moisture fled through them into the soil, leaving no nourishment.

"You may think this is a lot of melodrama." Who had said that. The Who who had spoken several times earlier. "It is *not* a lot of melodrama. It is essential. Es-sen-tial. Know this."

He knew it now. He was convinced of it. His stomach was convinced, at least. His stomach was devout, a true believer. Jog; jog and thud. Was it still too early to go? He could understand how the jogging would numb the mind as well as the stomach.

Finally, finally, it was time. He left the perimeter, scarcely believing his release had come, he left the well-beaten track and set off across the valley as the short night began.

There they were, on the far ridge, waving, beckoning to him. To him? Beckoning? Or horrified to see him approach? Him — Nevins the hunter, the killer, the vegetable-eating cannibal. Nevins the new one, perhaps crueler than the others who had come before.

Off he went, recalling his relatively calm conversation with Hunter (Hunter who had joined hunter — Ralph — in jogging around the track:) "But why do you call them wolves?"

And Hunter saying: "A euphemism. Both hunter and hunted became the wolves, the beasts. Each, driven by something outside itself, loses its human qualities. I, forced by hunger; they, shaken by terror."

"You agree with Cindy that they think?"

"I reject that possibility. I must. All I know is that they thrash about. Lots of plants can do that under certain circumstances. But these seem to be under a double terror, or whatever word you want to use. 'Fear' is too weak. First, their terror of being killed; second, the unacceptable realization that anyone or anything on their heretofore peaceful planet could conceive of killing another. In fact, killing was impossible because nobody — nothing, I mean — was able to move from the spot where he first germinated. I mean *it*."

Ralph knew what he meant.

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He had gone across the valley, through the toadstool wood, and was at the edge of the field of thrashing, terrified creatures. (Hunter was right: "fear" was too pallid a word.)

They could not be human; could not even be creatures. His mind told him this, but his emotions told him something else: Not only could they be creatures (living, if not breathing; thinking, if not speaking), they were human. He knew that now, as of this minute. And what was he doing here, about to commit an atrocity upon one of them? Who was he, God?, to be destroying another living creature? He was not a flesh-eater, true, but he was undeniably a cannibal.

Shut up, he told himself. You haven't destroyed anybody yet and it's a moot question whether you will. (This was not his stomach talking.) So don't let anybody panic you. You're just out here on a tactical exercise, so to speak — a dry run, so far, to see how you'll react when the real thing comes along, if it ever does. Of course you aren't going to kill these dear, helpless creatures.

His stomach laughed at this nonsense. Certainly he was going to kill. Kill and eat; kill and provide. It was kill or starve.

It wasn't an ethical problem at all — hadn't his pioneer ancestor's killed to feed their families? Hadn't they killed daily? Hadn't they slaughtered the dear little chickens and geese and bulls and brown-eyed calves and wooly lambs and whatever other sweet, succulent creatures stood between them and hunger, or even appetite? Of course they had. They might even be burning in hell for it — if there was a hell, anywhere else but here.

Then he recalled Cindy's vision of having communicated with them, or of having thought she had. He was having a vision of his own, in his extremity of starvation. He was communicating with them himself.

Well, not really: they were revealing themselves to him; he had said nothing to them except tacitly, by being there with a weapon which spoke for him; silently, terribly.

His hunger-induced revelations were graphic depictions of the most awful things that had ever happened to people he knew or to whom he was related. As remembered from his childhood in ghastly detail, they included:

His Uncle Alfred, arrested through some terrible miscarriage of justice and sentenced to a road gang in the South, dragging his ball and chain behind

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him as his poor, broken-blistered hands, which he had previously used to chalk abstruse, beautiful mathematical formulae on a blackboard at the Institute for Advanced Theory, tried to drive his mattock into the soil often enough to avoid the lash of the gang-master;

His Grandma Maud, polio victim, her leg in a brace, dragging it behind her as she tried to get closer to the faith healer who, for a twenty-five-dollar love offering, was laying on hands under a big tent in the vacant lot down near the railroad siding;

His father, a foot caught in his own fox trap, and so weak from loss of blood that he was unable to pry it open, crawling through the woods toward the house more than a mile away;

His mother, alone in the house in her wheelchair after her operation, when the oil-burner exploded . . .

More visions crowded in on him; visions of people burdened or crippled or otherwise rendered unable to move very far or very fast:

Visions of Roosevelt, of Joan of Arc, of Tantalus, of Christ . . .

Then the visions coalesced and the vegetable people, hurling themselves away in their terrified attempt to escape his sword, took on the personalities of his hallucinations. It was more than horrible, it was shocking and obscene, that he should be the instrument of their distruction, that he should be forced to choose which of these well beloved creatures he would maim and kill.

Worse: not which, but whom.

You always hurt the one you love . . .

But must you kill?

Must you choose among mother, father, saint, president, God? *Was* it necessary to decide, coldly, in the midst of horror, whom to destroy? *Did* continued existence demand that he pick which body would be sliced through with his blade? *Did* life depend on slaughter?

Ralph avoided the answers as the terrified plant creatures hurler themselves away from this executioner; from this despicable thing that would kill and eat its own family, its own Lord.

(But why not? Did not some religions hold that the communion wafer was the actual, the literal body of Christ? *Is* it cannibalism to eat the flesh of Jesus?

Faster and faster they seemed to circle, to come toward him reluctantly, fearfully, bending back away from him until they were almost flat on the ground; then, as their Coney Island ride brought them inevitably past

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hurricane-tossed palm branches, straining to escape, to be beyond the reach of his terrible blade.

Three times he raised his machete—three times, impelled by the gnawing in his stomach. Each time he let it fall to his side.

He sobbed in frustration: how could be cut down these beautiful people, these gods and goddesses? How could he butcher his mother or his father (or his Father) and then feed them to his friends?

Of course he couldn't. He dropped his machete. He'd rather die.

Then Hunter was there, shouting: "You've got to jog, man, jog! You were just standing. You can't let them get through to you; it's impossible if they do Jog, jog. Come on, Nevins! Can you do it? *Can* you?"

Obviously Ralph could not. He sank to the ground. Hunter said: "Too bad. Never mind; stand back."

With a swish of his own machete, Hunter lopped down a big stalk as it hurtled past him, expertly severing it close to the ground.

A hallucinatory voice, not Hunter's, taunted Ralph:

"How speaks he now,
This loud-voiced,
proud-voiced
newcomer?
"A change of tune,
a dull harpoon;
less haughty
than he thought he was."

It had a pedantic sound, as if one of his old professors of journalism, or maybe an over educated city editor, was sneering at him.

Then came Hunter's voice. There was nothing hallucinatory about it.

"Okay, Nevins, let's go. That's all for today."

But Ralph could do nothing and Hunter had to half-carry him back to the glade.

VI

The others watched openly as Cindy, cradling him in her left arm, his head against her breast, fed him. Too weak now to move or protest, he accepted mouthfuls of nourishment without questioning its origin. Cindy, feeding him and herself alternately, chewing away, smiled at him. He smiled back, chewing also, his palate reveling in what it imagined to be a smorgasbord of delicacies successively:

- the whitest, crunchiest celery, stuffed with the best homemade cheese, sprinkled with paprika;
- a gargantuan ripe olive, pitted;

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• crisp, warm, buttered whole wheat toast;

• freshly-given milk;

• a bite into a Winesap apple;

• a morsel of perfectly-fried scallop;

• a mouthful of Maine lobster, dipped in melted Wisconsin butter;

• a forkful of Idaho potato, baked, whipped with butter and salted;

• a slice of rare roast beef;

• a slightly-salted, gorgeously-green avocado half;

• a demi-tasse of Columbian coffee.

He was very delirious, of course.

That was about the end of it. Ralph never went out again. After he had been nourished back to the point where he could feed himself, Cindy would have nothing more to do with him. She retreated into her regal self, her moment of compassion spent.

Hunter once again assumed de facto command. He was their only possible provider. Despite the others' brave talk or their sneers at Ralph, Hunter was the only one who had been out more than once. Hunter alone had been capable of working out the logistics of the situation; he alone had been strong enough to keep his fears, his illusions, his hallucinations to himself. It was obvious that Cindy was only the titular ruler.

Sometime later Cadman died and Ralph took over the keeping of the journal.

The medics, who did not say why Cadman had died, buried him during the short, bright day, at the edge of the plant-people patch on the far ridge. It was only right, Ralph supposed, that Cadman's remains should nourish the roots of the plants.

Ralph wrote: "Now that I am no longer an active participant in the hunt, I am beginning to find it exciting."

At first the others expressed interest in his daily journal entries and even praised him, sometimes, for the cleverness of his writing.

"Cadman merely recorded," Jeffries said to him once, "but you comment. Cadman was a journalist, *you* are an historian."

Ralph glowed to that for days, although in his American way he would have said "a historian." To him the other was like saying "an horse."

But after a while Jeffries and the others, with one exception, lost interest in the journal, even when it mentioned them, and drew back to their own hummocks.

Only at night, when Hunter

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was out bagging their game, was there a drawing together in an approximation of a community spirit. And it was clear to Ralph now that nothing else mattered. Nothing else was *vital*.

And of course after a while Ralph wrote about nothing else. His daily entry was an ingenious attempt, by a resourceful journalist - turned - historian, to find fresh meaning in the nightly hunt.

The only other one who cared was Hunter. Therefore it became a ritual with them to meet after the nightly division of the nutrient (the vegetable, the meat, the Wafer — whatever it was) and for Hunter to describe his adventures to Ralph. Hunter would talk — in the first person singular or plural, depending on his mood — and Ralph would make notes before either of them touched his nightly ration.

Having finished his notes, Ralph and Hunter would withdraw to their separate hummocks and eat, Hunter vomiting less often than he used to. Ralph ate thoughtfully and without aftereffects, scarcely aware of his bites as he considered how best to transcribe his notes.

But there the strain became too much for even Hunter's ego and he became repetitive and dull.

Ralph became alarmed. If there were no more to write his function would vanish as Cadman's had. He would become superfluous.

He went to Cindy Garth, to record her reactions to the nightly kill, but she waved him away languidly. He wrote this up as verbosely as possible.

He went to Jeffries, who met him with an amused smile but told him: "Nothing to say, old boy." When Ralph persisted, Jeffries dismissed him by saying: "It's all been said, you know. I told it to Cadman a dozen times and he took it down each time. I have no desire to repeat myself to you. Look it up in Cadman's journal if you like but don't bother me."

Ralph wrote up his talk with Jeffries at as great a length as possible, quoting himself as well as Jeffries (he had deliberately asked some long-winded questions). But it was impossible to string it out forever.

He went to the medics and was rewarded with an outpouring of words. Away from the others, Larcom and Raney had witty and crackling things to say about the few events their world provided. Ralph, delighted, took full notes and transcribed at great length. This kept him busy for many days.

But then they began to repeat

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themselves. Their apparent wit charmed the new acquaintance, but one who came to know them for any length of time realized that there was a limit to the variations they could apply to their basic conversational formula. They became tiresome as well as repetitious. Then, as if realizing their failure to entertain, they became argumentive — first with each other, then with Ralph.

At that point Ralph, having transcribed all that was available from them jointly, interviewed them singly. Separate floodgates opened; Ralph took down page after page of pent-up frustration, petty tirade and invective as each of the medics turned his wrath on the other.

Fascinated, occasionally repelled, Ralph wrote them up at gratifying length, first together and then separately. But this field also went fallow as eventually each developed a case of the sulks and refused to talk to him.

This left no one.

Doggedly, Ralph went back to each: to Hunter who, having rested as raconteur, was good for a few more nights; to Jeffries, whose now-insulting behavior toward Ralph provided a day's copy; and to Cindy, who was completely silent but whose attitude Ralph described in great detail, drawing heavily on surmise.

Again there was no one left. Except — inspiration! — himself. But he found himself a thin source. For several days he talked to himself and recorded the result. But Ralph had always been an honest reporter and this deceit soon palled.

He was unable to delude himself, as Cadman had, that he was preparing a dispatch. Nor would he put down fiction or half-truths; his entire journalistic background rebelled against such heresy.

He examined his pen and the other one that Cadman had involuntarily bequeathed him. Ink aplenty, enough for a decade, remained in each. It seemed clear that there was more ink than there were words to write with it.

He knew now why poor Cadman had died. Cadman had been no egocentric hero. He had been, as Ralph Nevins was, an honest journalist: not an analyst but an annalist.

And the annals were complete. Nothing more remained to be said about this handful of human beings stranded on the only habitable planet between Sol's Earth and Barnard's Oph.

Nevertheless much *had* to be

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said, regardless of whether it was worth saying, if Ralph were to remain sane against the day when the rescue ship heaved to and took him home. The easy way would be to let himself slip into the madness of Ramsey Hunter and Cindy Garth, the apathy of Justin Jeffries or the self-centered isolation of the medics. But Ralph was not ready to give up. As long as he did not have to go out at night to bring in the sheaves, it was possible to work and to hope.

Then the engine in his mind started and its fuel was his memories. He realized that what was within himself was limited: there was only Ralph Nevins, at the current or earlier age, on which to draw. Still a single person was a microcosm of the human race and perhaps he was as good as any other for the purpose, at this particular time.

That being so, he reached back as far into his memory as it was possible to go...

(he knew that when he had nothing more to say he would be dead)

...and he found a place

Thus, one night, after having dined with pleasure, without questioning the source, on an unusually thick stalk which he chose to think tasted of Thanksgiving turkey, he wrote the following in his journal:

Book I, Chapter One
Nevins the Child, or, The Humble Start

Ralph Leslie Nevins, so named by his parents, Leslie Coombs and Leslie Hume Nevins (we shall return to this coincidence of names presently, aged respectively 25 and 22, was born, in wedlock, on an August day, the 17th, a Thursday, to be precise, in the Year of Our Lord, or Whoever is In Charge, 1999 . . .

And thus Ralph Nevins began the chronicle which we found when we grew over to the glade and which, together with other scattered documents from the worlds that they had attempted to colonize, provided us with an invaluable insight to the mores of those who knew themselves as human beings.

Oh, yes. To answer Ralph's question, it might just be noted that *we're* in charge here. And everywhere.

—Richard Wilson

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NEIGHBOR

BY ROBERT SILVERBERG

Illustrated by NODEL

Mortal enemies? No . . . for they were not quite mortal!

I

Fresh snow had fallen during the night. Now it lay like a white sheet atop the older snow, nine or ten feet of it, that already covered the plain. Now all was smooth and clear almost to the horizon. As Michael Holt peered through the foot-thick safety glass of his command room window, he saw, first of all, the zone of brown earth, a hundred yards in diameter, circling his house, and then the beginning of the snowfield with a few jagged bare trees jutting through it, and then, finally, a blot on the horizon, the metallic tower that was Andrew McDermott's dwelling.

Not in seventy or eighty years had Holt looked at the McDermott place without feeling hatred and irritation. The planet was big enough, wasn't it? Why had McDermott chosen to stick his pile of misshapen steel down right where Holt had to look at it all his days? McDermott's estate was big enough. McDermott could have built his house another fifty or sixty miles to the east, near the banks of the wide, shallow river that flowed through the heart of the con-

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tinent. He hadn't cared to. Holt had politely suggested it, when the surveyors and architects first came out from Earth. McDermott had just as politely insisted on putting his house where he wanted to put it.

It was still there. Michael Holt peered at it, and his insides roiled. He walked to the control console of the armament panel, and let his thin, gnarled hands rest for a moment on a gleaming rheostat.

There was an almost sexual manner to the way Holt fondled the jutting knobs and studs of the console. Now that his two hundredth year was approaching, he rarely handled the bodies of his wives that way any more. But then he did not love his wives as keenly as he loved the artillery emplacement with which he could blow Andrew McDermott to atoms.

Just let him provoke me, Holt thought.

He stood by the panel, a tall, gaunt man with a withered face and a savage hook of a nose and a surprisingly thick shock of faded red hair. He closed his eyes and allowed himself the luxury of a daydream.

He imagined that Andrew McDermott had given him offense. Not simply the eternal offense of being there in his view, but some direct, specific affront. Poaching on his land, perhaps. Or sending a robot out to hack down a tree on the borderland. Or putting up a flashing neon sign that mocked Holt in some vulgar way. Anything that would serve as an excuse for hostilities.

And then: Holt saw himself coming up here to the command room and broadcasting an ultimatum to the enemy. "Take that sign down, McDermott," he might say. "Keep your robots off my land," perhaps. Or else, "This means war!"

McDermott would answer with a blast of radiation, of course, because that was the kind of sneak he was. The deflector screens of Holt's front line defenses would handle the bolt with ease, soaking it in and feeding the energy straight to Holt's own generators.

Then, at long last, Holt would answer back. His fingers would tighten on the controls. Crackling arcs of energy would leap toward the ionosphere and bound downward at McDermott's place, spearing through his pitiful screens as though they weren't there. Holt saw himself gripping the controls with knuckle-whitening fervor, launching thunderbolt after thunderbolt while on the horizon Andrew McDermott's

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hideous keep blazed and glowed in hellish fire and crumpled and toppled and ran in molten puddles over the snow.

Yes, that would be the moment to live for!

That would be the moment of triumph!

To step back from the controls at last, and look through the window and see the glowing red spot on the horizon where the McDermott place had been. To pat the controls as though they were the flanks of a beloved old horse. To leave the house, and ride across the borderland into the McDermott estate, and see the charred ruin, and know that he was gone forever.

Then, of course, there would be an inquiry. The fifty lords of the planet would meet to discuss the battle, and Holt would explain, "He wantonly provoked me. I need not tell you how he gave me offense by building his house within my view. But this time—"

And Holt's fellow lords would nod sagely. They would understand, for they valued their own unblemished views as highly as Holt himself. They would exonerate him and grant him McDermott's land, as far as the horizon, so no newcomer could repeat the offense.

Michael Holt smiled. The daydream left him satisfied. His heart raced perhaps a little too enthusiastically as he pictured that slagheap on the horizon. He made an effort to calm himself. He was, after all, a fragile old man, much as he hated to admit it, and even the excitement of a daydream taxed his strength.

He walked away from the panel, back to the window.

Nothing had changed. The zone of brown earth where his melters kept back the snow, and then the white field, and finally the excrescence on the horizon, glinting coppery red in the thin midday sunlight. Holt scowled. The daydream had changed nothing. No shot had been fired. McDermott's keep still stained the view. Turning, Holt began to shuffle slowly out of the room, toward the dropshaft that would take him five floors downward to his family.

II

The communicator chimed. Holt stared at the screen in surprise.

"Yes?"

"An outside call for you, Lord Holt. Lord McDermott is calling," the bland metallic voice said.

"Lord McDermott's secretary, you mean?"

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"It is Lord McDermott himself, your lordship."

Holt blinked. "You're joking," he said. "It's fifty years since he called me. If this is a prank I'll have your circuits shorted!"

"I cannot joke, your lordship. Shall I tell Lord McDermott you do not wish to speak to him?"

"Of course!" Holt snapped. "No — wait. Find out what he wants. *Then* tell him I can't speak to him."

Holt sank back into a chair in front of the screen. He nudged a button with his elbow, and tiny fingers began to massage the muscles of his back, where tension poisons had suddenly flooded in to stiffen him.

McDermott calling? What for?

To complain, of course. Some trespass, no doubt. Some serious trespass, if McDermott felt he had to make the call himself.

Michael Holt's blood warmed. Let him complain! Let him accuse, let him bluster! Perhaps this would give the excuse for hostilities at last. Holt ached to declare war. He had been guilding his armaments patiently for decade after decade, and he knew beyond doubt that he had the capability to destroy McDermott within moments after the first shot was fired. No screens in the universe could withstand the array of weaponry Holt had assembled. The outcome of a conflict was in no doubt. *Let him start something,* Michael Holt prayed. *Oh, let him be the aggressor! I'm ready for him, and more than ready!*

The bell chimed again. The robot voice of Holt's secretary said, "I have spoken to him, your lordship. He will tell me nothing. He wants you."

Holt sighed. "Very well. Put him on, then."

There was a moment of electronic chaos on the screen as the robot shifted from the inside channel to an outside one. Holt sat stiffly, annoyed by the sudden anxiety he felt. He realized, strangely, that he had forgotten what his enemy's voice sounded like. All communication between them had been through robot intermediaries for years.

The screen brightened and showed a test pattern. A hoarse, querulous voice said, "Holt? Holt, where are you?"

"Right here in my chair, McDermott. What's troubling you?"

"Turn your visual on. Let me have a look at you, Holt."

"You can speak your piece without seeing me, can't you? Is my face that fascinating to you?"

"Please. This is no time for bickering. Turn the visual on!"

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"Let me remind you," Holt said coldly, "that *you* have called *me*. The normal rules of etiquette require that I have the privilege of deciding on the manner of transmission. And I prefer not to be seen. I also prefer not to be speaking to you. You have thirty seconds to state your complaint. Important business awaits me."

There was silence. Holt gripped the arms of his chair and signalled for a more intense massage. He became aware, in great irritation, that his hands were trembling. He glared at the screen as though he could burn his enemy's brain out simply by sending angry thoughts over the communicator.

McDermott said finally, "I have no complaint, Holt. Only an invitation."

"To tea?" Holt sneered.

"Call it that. I want you to come here, Holt."

"You've lost your mind!"

"Not yet. Come to me. Let's have a truce," McDermott rasped. "We're both old, sick, stupid men. It's time to stop the hatred."

Holt laughed. "We're both old, yes. But I'm not sick and you're the only stupid one. Isn't it a little late for the olive branch?"

"Never too late."

"You know there can't ever be peace between us," Holt said. "Not so long as that eyesore of yours sticks up over the trees. It's a cinder in my eye, McDermott. I can't ever forgive you for building it."

"Will you listen to me?" McDermott said. "When I'm gone, you can blast the place apart, if it pleases you. All I want is for you to come here. I — I need you, Holt. I want you to pay me a visit."

"Why don't you come here, then?" Holt jeered. "I'll throw my door wide for you. We'll sit by the fire and reminisce about all the years we hated each other."

"If I could come to you," McDermott said, "there would be no need for us to meet at all."

"What do you mean?"

"Turn your visual on, and you'll see."

Michael Holt frowned. He knew he had become hideous with age, and he was not eager to show himself to his enemy. But he could not see McDermott without revealing himself at the same time. With an abrupt, impulsive gesture, Holt jabbed the control button in his chair. The mists on the screen faded, and an image appeared.

All Holt could see was a face, shrunken, wizened, wasted. McDermott was past two hundred,

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Holt knew, and he looked it. There was no flesh left on his face. The skin lay like parchment over bone. The left side of his face was distorted, the nostril flared, the mouth-corner dragged down to reveal the teeth, the eyelid drooping. Below the chin, McDermott was invisible, swathed in machinery, his body cocooned in what was probably a nutrient bath. He was obviously in bad shape.

He said, "I've had a stroke, Holt. I'm paralyzed from the neck down. I can't hurt you."

"When did this happen?"

"A year ago."

"You've kept very quiet about it," Holt said.

"I didn't think you'd care to know. But now I do. I'm dying, Holt, and I want to see you once face to face before I die. I know you're suspicious. You think I'm crazy to ask you to come here. I'll turn my screens off. I'll send all my robots across the river. I'll be absolutely alone here, helpless, and you can come with an army if you like. There. Doesn't that sound like a trap, Holt? I know I'd think so if I were in your place and you were in mine. But it isn't a trap. Can you believe that? I'll open my door to you. You can come and laugh in my face as I lie here. But come. There's something I have to tell you, something of vital importance to you. And you've got to be here in person when I tell you. You won't regret coming. Believe that, Holt."

Holt stared at the wizened creature in the screen, and trembled with doubt and confusion.

The man must be a lunatic! It was years since Holt had last stepped beyond the protection of his own screens. Now McDermott was asking him not only to go into the open field, where he might be gunned down with ease, but to enter into McDermott's house itself, to put his head right between the jaws of the lion.

Absurd!

McDermott said, "Let me show you my sincerity. My screens are off. Take a shot at the house. Hit it anywhere. Go ahead. Do your worst!"

Deeply troubled, chilled with mystification, Holt elbowed out of his chair and went beyond the range of the visual pickup, over to the control console of the guns. How many times in dreams he had fondled these studs and knobs, never once daring to fire them except in test shots directed at his own property! It was unreal to be actually training the sights on the gleaming tower of McDermott's house at last. Excitement surged

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in him. Could this all be some subtle way, he wondered, of causing him to have a fatal heart attack through overstimulation?

He gripped the controls. He pondered, considered tossing a thousand megawatt beam at McDermott, then decided to use something a little milder. If the screens really were down all the way, even his feeblest shot would score.

He sighted — not on the house itself, but on a tree just within McDermott's inner circle of defense. He fired, still half convinced he was dreaming. The tree became a yard-high stump.

"That's it," McDermott called. "Go on. Aim at the house, too! Knock a turret off — the screens are down!"

Senile dementia, Holt thought. Baffled, he lifted the sight a bit and let the beam play against one of McDermott's outbuildings. The shielded wall glowed a moment, then gave as the beam smashed its way through. Ten square feet of McDermott's castle now was a soup of protons, fleeing into the cold.

Holt realized in stunned disbelief that there was nothing at all preventing him from destroying McDermott and his odious house entirely.

There was no risk of a counterattack. He would not even need to use the heavy artillery that he had been so jealously hoarding against this day. A light beam would do it easily enough.

It would be too easy this way, though.

There could be no pleasure in a wanton attack. McDermott had not provoked him. Rather, he sat there in his cocoon, sniveling and begging to be visited.

Holt returned to the visual field. "I must be as crazy as you are," he said. "Turn your robots loose and leave your screens down. I'll come to visit you. I wish I understood this, but I'll come anyway."

III

Michael Holt called his family together. Three wives, the eldest near his own age, the youngest only seventy. Seven sons, ranging in age from sixty to a hundred thirteen. The wives of his sons. His grandchildren. His top echelon of robots.

He assembled them in the grand hall of Holt Keep, took his place at the head of the table, and stared down the rows at their faces, so like his own. He said quietly, "I am going to pay a call on Lord McDermott."

He could see the shock on

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their faces. They were too well disciplined to speak their minds, of course. He was Lord Holt. His word was law, and he could, if he so pleased, order them all put to death on the spot. Once, many years before, he had been forced to assert his parental authority in just such a way, and no one would ever forget it.

He smiled. "You think I've gone soft in my old age, and perhaps I have. But McDermott has had a stroke. He's completely paralyzed from the neck down. He wants to tell me something, and I'm going to go. His screens are down and he's sending all his robots out of the house. I could have blasted the place apart if I wanted to."

He could see the muscles working in the jaws of his sons. They wanted to cry out, but they did not dare.

Holt went on, "I'm going alone except for a few robots. If there's been no word from me for half an hour after I'm seen entering the house, you're authorized to come after me. If there's any interference with the rescue party, it will mean war. But I don't think there'll be trouble. Anyone who comes after me in less than half an hour will be put to death."

Holt's words died away in a shiver of echoes. He eyed them all, one at a time.

This was a critical moment, he knew. If they dared, they might decide among themselves that he had gone mad, and depose him. That had happened before, too, in other families. They could topple him, reprogram all the robots to take commands from them instead and confine him to his wing of the house. He had given them evidence enough, just now, of his irresponsibility.

But they made no move. They lacked the guts. He was head of the household, and his word was law. They sat, pale and shaken and dazed, as he rolled his chair past them and out of the grand hall.

Within an hour, he was ready to go. Winter was in the fourth of its seven months, and Michael Holt had not left the house since the first snowfall. But he had nothing to fear from the elements. He would not come in contact with the frigid air of the sub-zero plain. He entered his car within his own house, and it glided out past the defense perimeter, a gleaming dark teardrop sliding over the fresh snow. Eight of his robots accompanied him, a good enough army for almost any emergency.

A visual pickup showed him the scene at McDermott Keep. The robots were filing out, an army of black ants cluster-

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ing around the great gate. He could see them marching eastward, vanishing from sight beyond the house. A robot overhead reported that they were heading for the river by the dozens.

The miles flew past. Black, twisted trees poked through the snow, and Holt's car weaved a way through them. Far below, under many feet of whiteness, lay the fertile fields. In the spring all would be green. The leafy trees would help to shield the view of McDermott Keep, though they could not hide it altogether. In winter, the ugly copper-colored house was totally visible. That made the winters all the more difficult for Holt to endure.

A robot said softly, "We are approaching the borderlands, your lordship."

"Try a test shot to see if his screens are still down."

"Shall I aim for the house?"

"No. A tree."

Holt watched. A thick-boled, stubby tree in McDermott's front palisade gleamed a moment, and then was gone.

"The screens are still down," the robot reported.

"All right. Let's cross the border."

He leaned back against the cushion. The car shot forward.

They left the bounds of Holt's own estate, now, and entered McDermott's.

There was no warning ping to tell them they were trespassing. McDermott had even turned off the boundary scanners, then. Holt pressed sweaty palms together. More than ever now he felt that he had let himself be drawn into some sort of trap. There was no turning back now. He was across the border, into McDermott's own territory. Better to die boldly, he thought, than to live huddled in a shell.

He had never been this close to McDermott Keep before. When it was being built, McDermott had invited him to inspect it, but Holt had of course refused. Nor had he been to the housewarming. Alone among the lords of the planet, he had stayed home to sulk. He could hardly even remember when he had last left his own land at all. There were few places to go on this world, with its fifty estates of great size running through the temperate belt. Whenever Holt thirsted for the companionship of any of his fellow lords, which was not often, he could have it easily enough via telescreen. Some of them came to him, now and then.

It was strange that when he finally did stir to pay a call, it should be a call on McDermott.

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Drawing near the enemy keep, he found himself reluctantly admitting that it was less close range than it seemed from the windows of Holt Keep. It was a great blocky building, hundreds of yards long, with a tall octagonal tower rising out of its northern end, a metal spike jabbing perhaps five hundred feet high. The reflected afternoon light, bouncing from the snowfield, gave the metal-sheathed building a curiously oily look, not unattractive at this distance.

"We are within the outer defense perimeter," a robot told Holt.

"Keep going."

The robots sounded worried and perturbed, he thought. Of course, they weren't programmed to show much emotional range, but he could detect a note of puzzlement in what they said and how they said it. They couldn't understand this at all. It did not seem to be an invasion of McDermott Keep — that they could have understood. But it was not a friendly visit, either. The robots did not know what to make of this journey.

They were not alone in their confusion at this most unusual situation, Holt thought grimly. He sat back nervously as he and his guardian robots were swiftly carried forward.

IV

When they were a hundred yards from the great gate of McDermott Keep, the doors swung wide. Holt called McDermott and said, "See that those doors stay open all the time I'm here. If they begin to close, there'll be trouble."

McDermott said, "Don't worry. I'm not planning any tricks."

Holt's car shot between the gate walls, and he knew that now he was at his enemy's mercy in earnest. His car rolled up to the open carport, and went on through, so that now he was actually within McDermott Keep. His robots followed him through.

"May I close the carport?"

"Keep it open!" Holt said. "I don't mind the cold."

The hood of his car swung back. His robots helped him out. Holt shivered momentarily as the cold outside air, filtering into the carport, touched him. Then he passed through the irising inner door and, flanked by two sturdy robots, walked slowly but doggedly into the Keep.

McDermott's voice reached him over a loudspeaker. "I am on the third floor of the tower," he said. "If I had not sent all the robots away, I could have let one of them guide you."

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"You could send a member of your family down," Holt said sourly.

McDermott ignored that. "Continue down the corridor until it turns. Go past the armor room. You will reach a dropshaft that leads upward."

Holt and his robots moved through the silent halls.

The place was like a museum. The dark, high-vaulted corridor was lined with statuary and artifacts, everything musty-looking and depressing. How could anyone want to live in a tomb like this? Holt passed a shadowy room where ancient suits of armor stood mounted. He could not help but compute the cost of shipping such useless things across the light-years from Earth.

They came to the dropshaft. Holt and his two robots entered. A robot nudged the reversing stud, and up they went, into the tower Holt had hated so long. McDermott guided them with a word or two.

They passed down a long hall whose dull, dark walls were set off by a gleaming floor that looked like onyx. A sphincter opened, admitting them to an oval room ringed by windows, exhaling a dry, foul stench of death and decay.

Andrew McDermott sat squarely in the middle of the room, nesting in his life-capsule. A tangled network of tubes and pipes surrounded him. All of McDermott that was visible was a pair of eyes, two shining coals in the wasted face.

"I'm glad you came," McDermott said. His voice, without benefit of electronic amplification, was thin and feeble, like the sound of feathers brushing through the air.

Holt stared at him in fascination. "I never thought I'd see this room," he said.

"I never though you would either. But it was good of you to come, Holt. You look well, you know. For a man your age." The thin lips curled in a grotesque twisted smile. "Of course, you're still a youngster. Not even two hundred yet. I've got you by thirty-odd years."

Holt did not feel like listening to the older man's ramblings. "What is it you wanted?" he asked without warmth. "I'm here, but I'm not going to stay all day. You said you had something vital to tell me."

"Not really to tell," McDermott said. "More to ask. A favor. I want you to kill me, Holt."

"What?"

"It's very simple. Disconnect my feed line. There it is, right by my feet. Just rip it out. I'll be dead in an hour. Or do it even

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more quickly. Turn off my lungs. This switch, right here. That would be the humane way."

"You have a strange sense of humor," Holt said.

"Do you think so? Top the joke, then. Throw the switch and cap the jest."

"You made me come all the way here to *kill* you?"

"Yes," McDermott said. The blazing eyes were unblinking now. "I've been immobilized for a year now. I'm a vegetable in this thing. I sit here day after day, idle, bored. And healthy. I might live another hundred years — do you realize that, Holt? I've had a stroke, yes. I'm paralyzed. But my body's still vigorous. This damned capsule of mine keeps me in tone. It feeds me and exercises me and — *do you think I want to go on living this way, Holt?* Would you?"

Holt shrugged. "If you want to die, you could ask someone in your family to unplug you."

"I have no family."

"Is that true? You had five sons —"

"Four dead, Holt. The other one gone to Earth. No one lives here any more. I've outlasted them all. I'm as eternal as the heavens. Two hundred thirty years, that's long enough to live. My wives are dead, my grandchildren gone away. They'll come home when they find they've inherited. Not before. There's no one here to throw the switch."

"Your robots," Holt suggested.

Again the grim smile. "You must have special robots, Holt. I don't have any that can be tricked into killing their master. I've tried it. They know what'll happen if my life-capsule is disconnected. They won't do it. *You* do it, Holt! Turn me off. Blow the tower to hell, if it bothers you. You've won the game. The prize is yours."

There was a dryness in Holt's throat, a band of pressure across his chest. He tottered a little.

His robots, ever sensitive to his condition, steadied him and guided him to a chair. He had been on his feet a long time for a man of his age. He sat quietly until the spasm passed.

Then he said, "I won't do it."

"Why not?"

"It's too simple, McDermott. I've hated you too long. I can't just flip a switch and turn you off."

"Bombard me, then. Blast the tower down!"

"Without provocation? Do you think I'm a criminal?" Holt asked.

"What do you want me to do?" McDermott said tiredly. "Order

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my robots to trespass? Set fire to your orchards? What will provoke you, Holt?"

"Nothing," Holt said. "I don't want to kill you. Get someone else to do it."

The eyes glittered. "You devil," McDermott said. "You absolute devil. I never realized how much you hated me. I send for you in a time of need, asking to be put out of my misery, and will you grant me that? Oh, no. Suddenly you get noble. You won't kill me! You devil, I see right through you. You'll go back to your keep and gloat because I'm a living dead man here. You'll chuckle to yourself because I'm alone and frozen into this capsule. Oh, Holt, it's not right to hate so deeply! I admit I've given offense. I deliberately built the tower here to wound your pride. Punish me, then. Take my life. Destroy my tower. Don't leave me here!"

Holt was silent. He moistened his lips, filled his lungs with breath, got to his feet. He stood straight and tall, towering over the capsule that held his enemy.

"Throw the switch," McDermott begged.

"I'm sorry."

"Devil!"

Holt looked at his robots. "It's time to go," he said. "There's no need for you to guide us. We can find our way out."

V

The teardrop-shaped car sped across shining snow. Holt said nothing as he made the return journey.

His mind clung to the image of the immobilized McDermott, and there was no room for any other thought. That stench of decay that tingled in his nostrils — that glint of madness in the eyes as they begged for oblivion.

They were crossing the borderlands now. Holt's car broke the warning barrier and got a pinging signal to halt and identify. A robot gave the password, and they went on toward Holt Keep.

His family clustered near the entrance, pale, mystified. Holt walked in under his own steam. They were bursting with questions, but no one dared ask anything. It remained for Holt to say the first word.

He said, "McDermott's a sick, crazy old man. His family is dead or gone. He's a pathetic and disgusting sight. I don't want to talk about the visit."

Sweeping past them, Holt ascended the shaft to the command room. He peered out, over the snowy field. There was a double track in the snow, leading to and from McDermott Keep, and the sunlight blazed in the track.

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The building shuddered suddenly. Holt heard a hiss and a whine. He flipped on his communicator and a robot voice said, "McDermott Keep is attacking, your lordship. We've deflected a high-energy bombardment."

"Did the screens have any trouble with it?"

"No, your lordship. Not at all. Shall I prepare for a counterattack?"

Holt smiled. "No," he said. "Take defensive measures only. Extend the screens right to the border and keep them there. Don't let McDermott do any harm. He's only trying to provoke me. But he won't succeed."

The tall, gaunt man walked to the control panel. His gnarled hands rested lovingly on the equipment. So they had come to warfare at last, he thought. The cannon of McDermott Keep were doing their puny worst. Flickering needles told the story: whatever McDermott was throwing was being absorbed easily. He didn't have the firepower to do any real harm.

Holt's hands tightened on the controls. Now, he thought, he could blast McDermott Keep to ash. But he would not do it, any more then he would have thrown the switch that would have ended Andrew McDermott's life.

McDermott did not understand. Not cruelty, but simple selfishness, had kept him from killing the enemy lord. Just as, all these years, Holt had refrained from launching an attack he was certain to win. He felt remotely sorry for the paralyzed man locked in the life-capsule. But it was inconceivable that Holt would kill him.

Once you are gone, Andrew, who will I have to hate?

That was why he had not killed. For no other reason.

Michael Holt peered through the foot-thick safety glass of his command room window. He saw the zone of brown earth, the snowfield with its fresh track, and the coppery ugliness of McDermott Keep. His intestines writhed at the hideousness of that baroque tower against the horizon. He imagined the skyline as it had looked a hundred years ago, before McDermott had built his foul keep.

He fondled the controls of his artillery bank as though they were a young girl's breasts. Then he turned, slowly and stiffly, making his way across the command room to his chair, and sat quietly, listening to the sound of Andrew McDermott's futile bombardment expending itself against the outer defenses of Holt Keep as the winter night fell.—ROBERT SILVERBERG.

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THE DELEGATE FROM GUAPANGA

BY WYMAN GUIN

Illustrated by FINLAY

Wild as political conventions are here on Earth — think what they're like out among the turbulent stars!

I

My eldest son, who looks so much like his mother, my chief wife, shrugged his shoulders and glanced at the branch above.

He said sullenly, "Yes, I will swing into the tree when it's time."

I turned again to be sure the bearers were safely up on the his head.

bluff. I selected an arrow and fitted it to my bow and cautiously walked out across the hot glade of teree grass. In the far thicket the charl boar grubbed and snorted unconcernedly.

Back at the lodge, a day's walk from here, all my elite people had paused and were concentrating telepathically on our minds here. Through my eyes, through my son's eyes, through the eyes

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of the nontelepathic bearers on the bluff, they watched this scene, alerted by our tension.

My third wife, the dainty little one from Kewananga, stopped her romping with the children and hushed them. Innocently, she censured me.

"You should not have taken your son on this dirty killing."

My chief wife, the boy's mother, was not speaking to me.

My father, aging beside the small fire in his room of memories, whispered to me in excitement. "Careful, son. He's a big brute. Hear the weight of him when he moves."

Red Giant boiled hugely in the afternoon sky as if he trembled to engulf his tiny companion sun, White Dwarf. In this glade the pink teree grass reflected the red sunlight and shimmered ominously.

I glanced back one last time at my son. In that instant, I saw that he was not yet the "young man" I had thought to bring on his first hunt. He was just a slim boy confused by his noodle-headed mother. Well, it was too late now to leave him home as he and his mother had wished.

The charl boar would have scented us long ago except for the pungent odor of the giant fungus he was grubbing. Now, I penetrated too far into the bittersweet aroma that drifted from the thicket. I felt the old thrill race along my back, and I glanced reassuringly across to my son.

His sudden thought shook me—far more than the sonic boom that came at that moment from some Matterist rocket beyond the Guapanga mountains. The boar, monstrous and unstoppable, charged from the thicket.

My son's task was to put an arrow into his driving rear flank. He was to yell and divert him toward the tree. He did neither. He threw down his bow and swung into the tree.

There was no place for me to run. The bearers were yelling from the rock . . . with no effect on the boar. Flashing toward me across the teree grass, the boar held the gleaming tusks high. A greasy chill clutched my belly while I cursed my chief wife with my mouth and with my mind.

The boar's head went down and I drew the bow. I watched the heaving spot at the base of his massive shoulder hump where the gray bristles make a swirl. There is an opening there. A spear will not enter it, but a man may sometimes put an arrow through it and sever the spinal cord.

I did. His front legs buckled. The great rump with its shoddy flag of a tail vaulted at me. I was knocked flat and the car-

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cass crashed painfully across my legs.

At his shoulder this boar had stood almost as high as a man. I lay waiting for the bearers to get him off me. I looked up at the churning surface of Red Giant and marveled that I was still alive.

After I was standing, the head bearer grasped my arms in the traditional gesture but he avoided my eyes. He said, "Tawe tawa," which scholars say once meant, "Hunter of hunters," in the primitive vocal language.

The other bearers were blank-faced and they did not dance on the carcass or pass wine. I looked down on the charl boar . . . certainly the greatest I had ever killed.

I yelled with my mind and did not care that elite Guapanga might hear: "Woman! Because of your nuts-and-fruit thinking, I cannot mount this shameful head in our lodge!"

The chief bearer, knowing only the silence in the glade, took out his steel knife and began expertly to dress the animal. The other bearers got in his way helping. They were anxious to avoid my eyes. Their atelepathic minds cringed from the probing they hoped I was gentlemanly enough not to make.

I felt my face burn. I looked over to where my eldest son stood. Because of this boy's mother and the radical Mentalist thinking she had recently subscribed to, none of my three wives now admitted me to their rooms. Because of this boy and his goose of a mother, I was almost dead with a tusk from groin to throat.

I walked over to where his mind seethed with sactimonious pride in his absurd Mentalist extremes, and with horror at the sight of the great boar bearing down on me.

The words in this confusion were, "I did what I knew at the last moment I had to do. I tried to explain my Mentalist principles to you and you wouldn't listen. My mother has condoned my decision."

Abruptly, my chief wife was in my mind, horrified at what had almost happened to me, protective of the boy and still stubborn with righteousness. "Our son will devote his life to building our beautiful Mentalist heritage. He cannot taint himself with killing."

I heard a groan from my lips. "Leave us, woman."

Now she wept. From the bench were she sat in the courtyard of the lodge the paving stones blurred as though in rain, and her mouth cried out, "My husband, we have almost killed you. For-

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give us. The boy had never seen a live boar. He did not know. Forgive me, and I will give up my thinking."

"Leave us."

"You were dying and you cursed me before the elite world."

"Leave us."

I stood hot-eyed before the boy. I am a conservative Mentalist — which is the conservative party in the first place. I know exactly what the Matterists are after — and I am dead against it. I do not allow the use of any machines anywhere on my lands. My grandfather fought against the vote for women until the radical Mentalists finally beat him fifty years ago. To this day no elite woman from Guapanga casts a vote.

Among conservative Mentalists, I am rockbound conservative. To the radicals, I am "The Mountain Ogre." Now I faced a cowardly son because radical women's thinking had entered my own household. I was about as dead politically as a man can get and still cast a vote.

Even as I stood there I could hear the first repercussions of this shameful incident snickering off into the Mentalist world. "Oh, didn't he turn out to be an ogre at home?" "Well, you must admit, he's great with boars."

Another Matterist passenger rocket screamed overhead. Its parting thunder boomed back from the gorges of Guapanga. This irritating sound was, as they say, the gem that sank the boat. I slapped the boy.

Yet, even as my helpless rage propelled the hand, I felt my own guilt slow it.

Afterward, it was not a time to admit that feeling of guilt. It was time — and far too late a time — to start contradicting his mother's thinking.

With my mind I said to him, "Very well. All is mind. Matter is an illusion. But a mental charl boar can kill a mental man as surely as if he were material. And a mental son has a duty to his mental father."

Now his shame dominated his confusion and he bawled. I went on, "The Mentalist culture of which you are so proud will not protect your feet from stones, while this boar will make shoes for the whole lodge. You must eat meat and meat must be killed."

Stubbornly, through his shame, he echoed his mother. "The killing should be done by common men, not by a Mentalist."

These Mentalist fads and cults, such as the one my chief wife was dabbling in, had grown only in the last five years since the Chupa Uprisings. They were unhealthy signs of the shock and

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fear left in us by the unexpected revolt of the chupas.

I shook my head. "Arm your tenants and train them to hunt? One day you will find them hunting you." I reached out and gripped his arm. "Your grandfather built this Mentalist empire here in the Guapangas, sprang between two Matterist republics. Geographically and spiritually it *must* be the most Mentalist of empires. It must be the conservative stronghold. And that means, among many other things, killing your own meat."

Now I was through with him. I was not quite in a mood to start making a chum of him. "You will return with the bearers. I am going back alone."

I walked over to the bearers. "The boy will return with you."

The head bearer looked me in the eye now and nodded respectfully. "Yes, Excellency."

II

From that high valley at the feet of the Guapangas, I followed a great conifered ridge that borders my lands. I walked in telepathic solitude, angry and ashamed.

In the late afternoon I arrived at a craggy mountain that stands apart from its parent Guapangas. There the ridge begins to drop toward my lodge. At the base of this mountain there is a little lake and I stopped and bathed. Afterward, I lay on the grassy bank and watched a herd of greathorns high on the mountain as they made their dainty way from one perilous coign to another.

I became aware of the approach of a Matterist. We both ceremonially closed our minds.

"I pass your mind in peace. May Mr. Executive shield us both."

"I withdraw my mind with respect. I commend you to Old Man."

The present political divisions, Matterists and Mentalists, were left after all of the ancient telepathic cultures had fused or been annihilated. In the meantime there had evolved the institution of the Old Man. (The priggish Matterists call him Mr. Executive, but he is still just Old Man.)

The Old Man is one mind which stands between the two planet-wide political parties and acts as final law for both. Our greatest political crisis comes when an Old Man dies. Then hurriedly come the two planet-wide telepathic conventions — the building of the two new platforms — the election of two opposing candidates (one of which will become the new Old Man) — and finally, the moment of "war".

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In the truce after the "war" the candidate of the victors cautiously contacts the minds of the defeated. With utmost care he synthesizes a pragmatic position for himself embracing, if he is a Mentalist, one after another of the Matterist points of faith, as "beliefs necessary to the well-being of my Matterist subjects." At the same time he rarefies his former Mentalist beliefs into pragmatic notions necessary to "guide my actions and obtain my ends as Old Man."

Now his one mind handles the two conflicting faiths in a logical manner, and for his lifetime he keeps the peace.

He keeps the peace absolutely because none may plot against him for a moment. Awake or asleep, and without any bother on his part, his mind would automatically shunt contradictory beliefs into the mind of the plotter and thus confuse him completely.

I rose from the grass and dressed to meet the Matterist.

It was some time before he appeared around a wooded knoll. He had with him two bearers who carried the carcass of a greathorn. The beautiful curving horns were the color of nut meats.

His machine-made clothing was drab and unpretentious compared to the elegance of my cap and tunic, the silk of my breeches and the handsomely tooled leather of my boots. He wore the usual unadorned clothes and his machine-made boots were plain.

He was a neighbor of mine. As I looked to the south down his valley, I could see the ugly smudge from his pulp mills and paper factories. (The Matterists have a type of daily reading they are addicted to instead of enjoying books. Everything that has happened that day in their society, endless minutiae you would never pause over in telepathic scanning, they read about in the evening. They require enormous amounts of cheap paper to keep up this "papernews".)

The Matterist apologized unnecessarily. "I hope you don't mind that I pass through this part of your land. It is the only way I can get to the greathorns of this mountain.

I spread my hands. "You are welcome at any time."

Naturally we did not touch, and of course we spoke only with our mouths. Our minds were closed to each other. He was carrying a high-powered rifle with a telescopic sight. The telescope excited me. We may build telescopes to study Lalone and the other planets and moons. But to build or use a sight with which

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to kill would be a Matterist heresy.

I glanced up at the face of the mountain and found the herd of greathorns. "May I use your sight?"

Knowing I should not touch the rifle, he graciously dismounted the sight and handed it to me.

It was a wonderful thrill to me to have the herd of greathorns leap into close perspective. I watched their frightful, surefooted progress until retention of the sight became impolite. I returned it to him and he remounted it. Then he stood for a moment looking at the rusty sky where Red Giant hovered over the Guapangas.

He said, "Well, this time tomorrow we will each probably be casting our vote for the next Mr. Executive."

I stared at him in a stupid pause. He saw the ignorance on my face.

He said, "You must have spent the day absorbed in some very disturbing personal problem."

I focused in panic on the mind of Old Man.

He was dying. He had had a stroke and he was dying. The mountain beneath me rocked.

We looked at each other, the Matterist and I, and each saw the other's determination.

"Why are you so stubborn about this one thing? We only want to try it on one of them, and it is so far away."

I shook my head. "It is not just 'one thing'. I do not want to be told how many wives I may have, when I should work, or what I may read."

He flushed. "The last three Executives have been Mentalist candidates. Yet with the cooperation of your radical Mentalists these Executives have been able to afford us much of the change we needed. Why not this? We only want to try it on one of them."

He referred to a distant, yellow sun where the Matterists want to invade and colonize one of the planets. They have a theory that life is at its best under yellow suns. Three times now this ambition of theirs to colonize planets of yellow suns had been delayed because we had won the "war" and placed a Mentalist as Old Man.

This is the reason we Mentalists will not allow improvements in technology until we have improved our own souls. We see in the Matterists how the destructiveness of their engines has outstripped their ability to control themselves. They rationalize the crime they wish to carry out with the wide-eyed innocence of animals. It is to be only "one"

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experiment . . . at least until it has proved successful. That little insignificant yellow sun is so far away. Those distant semi-rationals who call their planet "Erth" do not even telepath. It is all so innocent and "progressive".

I said coldly, "I think your soul has plenty of room to improve right here under Red Giant and White Dwarf."

His face went rigid with anger. He saluted me stiffly and he and his bearers moved on.

I contacted my father-in-law in Basahn at once. "Councillor, I have had some personal problems. I did not realize . . ."

He is my chief wife's father. He said, "Yes, I have had tearful news of those problems. I reminded your wife that I would not tolerate her behavior myself and do not expect you to. In the name of my family, I apologize."

He proceeded bluntly to the plans for the Mentalist convention where he would certainly be the outstanding nominee for Old Man. He is a vigorous old lecher who keeps three wives and three concubines happy and still drinks a full gourd of wesah spirits a day. "I am sorry to say that your 'charl boar incident' has made you a laughing stock. There is now no chance to get you on the Council of Pragmatists until next fall."

"Yes, sir. I understand."

"Nevertheless, your voters are among the best trained in the Mentalist party, and your pragmatic stand is very important to us."

"Yes, sir. I am aware."

"Begin contacting your elite people at once. Old Man has rallied momentarily, but the end might come suddenly."

"I will do so."

III

I had no desire to be in this part of my lands with elections coming up. The moment Old Man was dead, the Matterists would be able to send out groups of atelepathic non-voters carrying rifles and explosives to pick off our elite people.

For this they cannot of course spare elite people from the voting and the "war". Also they cannot use highly destructive, nuclear weapons, because the geography of the two parties is so interlaced. They can only be picky with such killing, but I did not intend to be "picked".

While I walked and trotted, I contacted my party lieutenants and instructed them in the grouping of our voters along their convictions in pragmatism. My voters would, of course, be voting for the things I believe in. Any man that didn't would find

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himself off my lands next day, packing his wife and kids for the polar mines.

Until this morning, when my chief wife had made a planet-wide ass of me, I had been a powerful force in our Mentalist party. I had campaigned several years now for her father who owns much of Basahn beyond the Guapangas.

I invented his campaign slogan, "A man who believes in nothing makes a great Old Man."

Night before last, while my son and I were at camp on our inglorious charl boar hunt, I had made a scheduled speech that was listened to across the planet by all Mentalists. My pragmatism was naturally cheered by conservative Mentalists and hissed by radical Mentalists. But the most heartening response had been from the chupas. These children from the union of an elite person with a common, atelepathic person (usually a concubine), lacks nothing in intelligence and they telepath as well as elite people. Like the common people, however, they have minds of their own. Each chupa is a little culture to himself, completely independent.

They are realists, first and last, and seem always pragmatic. They like me. Now, since the Uprisings, they had become important politically.

Below the ridge the streaking lights of Matterist cars began to glow along their highway.

Only a few years ago Old Man had granted them this highway which crossed part of my land. It was not the least part of my disgust with the radical Mentalists that, to spite me, they had provided Old Man the necessary balance of opinion in this matter and allowed the desecration of a virgin Mentalist forest.

The moon nearest our planet, the little yellow one we call Falon the Messenger, came rocketing up in the east. By its waxy light I was able to descend at the proper point to the highway and cross under it through one of the wide tunnels which had been provided for moving wildlife. Above me the cars whistled on their pavement. The Matterist minds they carried were still closed to us, but they, too, were hurrying to be ready for Old Man's death.

As I came out of the tunnel, I became aware that the young Chupa overseer of my lands was on his way to meet me with a lantern. I was pleased that he had not delegated this to an atelepathic on this dangerous night.

He called to me with his strong, cheerful mind. "Excellency, I have just crossed the creek above Serapon Marsh. On Skull

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Hill I will swing a lantern until you sight me."

"I am climbing toward Skull Hill now. We will meet there."

I envied him, the chupa. He is now a lieutenant in my political organization and a good one. In this election he would work hard for me, though he had fought skillfully *against* me in the Chupa Uprisings. He was not the least ashamed of the Uprisings and, unlike many in the Mentalist elite, I do not hold those days against the chupas. The improvements in their station which they then gained had been due. After all, we in the elite worlds have only our own moral laxity to blame for the fact that there are chupas.

From the chupa lieutenant's mind came a solemn remark. "I, too, do not know for sure. But I would be honored if it were so."

The open minds which he and I kept with each other were occasionally embarrassing. It had passed through my mind that this chupa's mother had died without telling, but many have claimed that my own father was her elite lover.

One thing was sure, my father kept a stingy grip on that part of his memories.

I mounted the pass below the great rock skull that was bathed in the tallow light of Falon. His lantern came swinging toward me and he laughed with his mouth. "I saw your thatch before you saw my lantern."

I had taken off my cap, leaving my red hair loose.

The subtle mixture of lantern light and moonglow showed his firm features grinning at me. We grasped thumbs affectionately and started back the way he had come.

I noticed that when he was not speaking directly with his mind it closed rhythmically against me. I understood he would protect me against his thoughts about my son and chief wife.

I focused at once on my son's mind and spoke firmly but cheerfully. "How is your camp?"

"It is good, father. We are about half way back to the lodge from the high valleys."

"Have you seen to the comfort of your bearers?"

"Yes, we . . ." He paused and continued meekly, "We are broiling part of the boar and will eat soon."

"You realize that the Mentalist convention could start at any minute. Since you are not of voting age, close your mind at once and remain that way until contacted."

"Yes, father. I will do so."

The chupa shifted his lantern

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to his other hand and put his free arm on my shoulder. "I knew you would not continue to be harsh with the boy. It was not his fault, and he would never do it again."

Momentarily, the picture of thrashing a naked woman with a stick was embarrassingly sharp in his mind. He hastened his thinking to the words, "Of course, I have no rightful thoughts on whose fault it might have been."

As we started down the slopes above Serapon Marsh, he pointed east where Garrison Bluff was drenched in moonlight.

I nodded. The garrison was dark and deserted. My monks had already left their cells and each had departed alone for some impromptu retreat in the forest. There they would hold their convictions against Matterism and vote steadily for Mentalism. When the brief moment of "war" came, their full telepathic force would be against the Matterist platform. So now, if a Matterist non-voter chose to blow up the garrison, little would be lost.

As the chupa and I came up the stone walk to the lodge, my father-in-law contacted me again. "Old Man has weakened so that Intelligence is able to study the possible Matterist platform. I am confident that when the "war" comes we will win. If I am placed as Old Man I will ask immediately for you to be voted into the Council. You will lose due to that ridiculous charl boar business of this morning. However, I will keep asking and I am sure you will be voted in next fall."

My father-in-law withdrew his busy focus as the chupa and I passed beneath the autumn-spangled leera trees and entered the great stone-paved court of my lodge. I caught a glimpse of my chief wife hurrying along a portico in the waning light of Falon. Her robe blew about her fine figure in tallow folds that were mystically related to the wax-hard withdrawal of her proud mind.

The chupa grasped thumbs with me. "May the Mentalists win again." He saluted me ironically and left.

The lodge was dark and silent. The children were all asleep. The adults were awake and anxious about the convention. In his rooms off one of the upper porticos my aged father hummed to himself and dreamed of a convention and "war" in his youth. My second wife stirred uncomfortably in bed with the big baby she was carrying and resented its father profoundly. She would not speak with me when I focused comfortingly on her mind. She

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knew that I never cared to speak with her except to persuade her to have big heavy babies with heads like red melons.

A breeze moved through the trees and shrubs of the court. The splashing of the fountain was a great noise. The crackling of coals in the open cooking pit beyond the fountain was another noise. I found that I was desperately hungry.

Over the bed of coals the carcass of a black horn sizzled. There was a loaf of bread and a skin of wine on the stone table.

There were no servants to help me, of course. All the men were stationed about the grounds, guarding with bow and spear against the possible rifles and explosives of Matterist common people. Their women were huddled about their own cooking fire where they whispered the age-old superstitions about politics.

I cut a huge piece of the meat and ate it with the bread, sitting at the stone serving table. I drank the wine directly from the skin, chewed ravenously and stared into the coals.

My third wife, the little one from Kewananga, was no longer speaking with me, even to scold. She now sided completely with the chief wife whom I had cursed.

I decided to bathe again when I had finished eating. I threw off my harness of arrows and my clothes and left them in a heap on the stones of the court. I vaulted into the fountain, frightened the decorative fish into a shimmering explosion. Afterward I walked in angry nakedness across the court and along the great portico to my rooms.

The Matterists marry only one woman. I have often assumed from this basic stupidity springs the meanness of their culture. This night I had learned that three women are no certainty of affection.

Alone in my rooms, I shouted to all three of them with my mind, "Don't worry that I will not return from this convention with a firm mind! I will come back here with a stick and beat two of you all the way to the Basahn Hills. I will save the stick and when the other had whelped I will stand in one spot and beat affection into her. Her heart will melt for man and child."

I threw on a cap and left my rooms and let my boots crash theatrically on the stones. I went up the stairs and along the upper portico to my father's rooms.

He said with his mind, "Come in, son. After the convention I will come out on the portico to see you return with a stick. Then we will have peace and love about here once more."

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I entered and stood before him. To me his face will always be the most beautiful of my life. There is written in those deep seams a long life of building and adventure and care. It was he who had fought in three elections to win and place a Mentalist Old Man and prevent the Matterists from invading the planets of other suns. It was he, too, who had counseled me during the Chupa Uprisings. The memory of his understanding in those days stirred in me a sudden question.

"Are you the father of my chupa?"

He was angry with me. "You think of trivia in the presence of this ceremony!"

I was ashamed. I had caught from his mind a hard ache of remembered love and a sweet face, and this I had tricked from him. But this thought left one certainty. It is a fine thing to love a woman who can't read your mind.

I gestured placatingly for the ceremony.

All over our planet, where it was now light and where it was now dark, these ancient Mentalist words were being spoken. The hands of an old man trembled on the kneeling young one and the primitive, almost meaningless words of mouth were said by the ancient. After these magical words of mouth one could go into the forest and lie on the ground and fight the telepathic war. For, in ancient times, before the institution of Old Man; *the election was the war.*

I walked out of the lodge along the great portico which is supported by thirteen caryatids carved as the demons spawned in "The Beginning" by White Dwarf. There my chief wife knelt on the stones and grasped my thighs.

I did not put my hand on her dark and lovely head. She drew herself up my body and sought my lips. I did not refuse her this, but I could not return the kiss. Too clearly, gleaming tusks flashed in the teree grass.

It was cruel and insulting. Salty with tears, her lips moaned away from me. She turned and clung to a caryatid and it was the female demon, Paline. I left her sobbing face uncomforted between wooden breasts.

IV

Our autumn dawns start softly, a subtle, pink glowing without direction that grows and grows until suddenly day crashes in. Deep in a secret part of the forest I stood on a little eminence and leaned against a cold face of basalt.

I have always attended the political conventions from this

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secret place in my forests. Through the enormous rusty glowing a great black chahar winged his heavy way. Even as I watched his flight he gave his screaming cry, and it was day. The first ray from Red Giant lanced the black belly of a cloud, splashing blood across the high cliffs of Guapanga.

At that moment Old Man died.

His hand, held by that of his chief wife, relaxed. Over his fading telepathic fans, he muttered a name that was heard by waiting millions of us across the planet. Then he was dead.

The Mentalist convention began immediately. I walked over to a grassy knoll and lay down and closed my eyes.

Throughout the morning of voting on issues and principles that would make up our platform, there whispered outside our minds the ominous workings of the Matterist convention where an opposing platform was taking shape. These foreign arguments and all this communication we kept firmly from our minds. The moment would come soon enough when we would face them with our platform and they would face us with theirs. And in less time than it takes to melt a scoop of butter over a fire, the logic of the stronger side would begin to confuse and dissolve the logic of the weaker side. This would be the moment of "war". When it was finished one logic would stand intact across the planet and the victors would install the next Old Man.

While we were busy building the Mentalist platform our chupa minds stood respectfully aside. For a chupa thinks independently of the party platforms, just as a common man thinks pretty much as he pleases in his lonely world. But an elite man necessarily takes part in his telepathic culture (or, as we call it today, "platform"). It is the thing which forms his mental boundaries. Every elite person, upon the death of an Old Man, is deeply concerned with the changes that will occur in his allowable philosophy.

During the morning my chupa half-brother contacted me. "Excellency, can you spare a moment? It is important."

"Of course, but you know not to keep me too long."

"I have been increasingly aware that you intend to enter again your plea for dishonest government."

"Yes, I do. I suppose it will make as little impression this time as it has in the past. But it is an essential part of my conservatism and I can't neglect it."

"Pardon me, Excellency. I think it will make a very definite

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impression this time. We chupas, loyal to the Mentalists, have held a conference about it just now. We can promise you a solid vote for dishonesty in government."

I was stunned with pleasure. All morning, in the face of the general amusement over my first wife's disloyalty, I had availed myself only of my routine vote. Now I saw that my political fortune had turned in a moment.

"You see, Excellency, what this could mean when the two platforms are face to face."

Lying in the cool forest, I opened my eyes and looked across the rusty sky, and closed them. With a thrilling start I understood him. The chupas on the Matterist side would like this part of our platform as much as our chupas. They would *vote for* this aspect of *our platform.*

Shortly, the convention was at that point where the provincial law in Guapanga which forbids voting to woman was causing its usual trouble. A radical Mentalist from the east had the attention and was being particularly abusive.

This maneuver was not intended to do anything practical about the law itself. It was meant simply to discredit me, the law's chief defender, before I could propose any of my pragmatic aspects for our new platform.

The radical shouted, "Out there in those hills the women will try anything to get free."

This was the inevitable reference to "the charl boar incident." Everyone laughed, even the conservatives.

I held my peace. I would just have to wait my turn for attention which I could now see would not come again until afternoon. But when my turn did come, I was going to rock them.

I had been the first politician to see that pragmatism could be used within a party platform as well as by Old Man and the Council of Pragmatists. For example, I inovated having our common people vote against work. They continue to vote against work cheerfully and with great energy, knowing that they will be plowing their fields tomorrow. In our Mentalist platform a request for this vote is without difficulty, but in the final facing of the two platforms this strong vote cannot be absorbed by the Matterists to whom "work" must be the most important of virtues if they are to keep their factories going.

The parts of the platform coming up did not require unusual action. I decided to leave and have lunch. I contacted one of my elite lieutenants and left my vote for him to proxy with instructions for standard, conserva-

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tive responses. If anything came up he had only to contact me.

When I opened my eyes to the red forest, I found a young woman sitting on a rock near me. She rose and came toward me gracefully. She carried a freshly cut hasam gourd and in the other hand one of the huge hasam leaves folded as a pouch.

She knelt before me and handed me the gourd. "It is water from the creek." She indicated the nearby sound of the stream.

The water had, only a short time ago, splashed from the high snows of Guapanga. It made my teeth ache.

She spread the huge hasam leaf before me and I found that she had provided for my lunch exactly as I had planned to do. She had gathered the autumn nuts and berries and several kinds of fruit. She had cracked and cleaned the nuts into a separate smaller leaf.

She was not telepathic, but she was an unusual beauty. Her features were sensual without being soft. I watched with pleasure the grace of her walk.

I asked with my mouth, "Who sent you here?"

"No one sent me."

"Did you know I would be here?"

She smiled mysteriously. "I knew."

She picked up some of the fruit for herself, a bunch of ice-blue wesah. Then she indicated the meal with her head.

"Eat, Excellency. You will have to get back to the convention."

I did not wish to think about the speech I would give in the afternoon. Instinct told me I would destroy essential spontanity. I welcomed this woman as a diversion.

She sat and munched the wesah while I ate the meal and drank from the gourd. We watch each other in appreciative silence and grinned occasionally.

•

The little ginkas, both the red and the blue-furred ones, were gathering nuts beneath the red trees. In the forest there was only their chatter and the occasional belling of a black jay.

When she was satisfied that I was through eating, she asked, "Excellency, why doesn't your chief wife come to you?"

I saw that the common people, as well as the elite, knew of my problems. "You know it is unlawful for a delegate to be with his women during a convention."

She pretended to be naive. "Why is that, Excellency?"

"It used to be thought they might influence one's vote. Now they just vote contrary to one."

"And yet, Excellency, you may ask me to your arms."

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I did not like her brazen calm. "That is not proper at any time."

Her strange smile angered me. I was about to order her away when she raised her arms and undid the knot of her honey-colored hair so that it fell to her shoulders as girls wear their hair before marriageable age.

"Do you recognize me, Excellency? Wasn't there a time during the telepathic fighting of the chupas when you felt less harshly against my company."

Then I recognized her. She was the daughter of one of my tenants. While I had rested from fighting the chupas five years ago, she had happened by here.

She smiled. It was entirely a forgiving smile. "I was only a girl then, Excellency. I am a woman now. I have heard that your wives do not come to you, election day or not."

She declared this as bluntly as she might say, "I see that your red thatch needs trimming."

We sat there for some time, looking at each other through knowing lids while I remembered her sweet youth and felt a ravenous need for her. I beckoned her to me, and as I did so I realized that the air-tide of our planet was rising.

Red Giant and White Dwarf were overhead. Together they draw an angry tide of storm through all our noons.

Even as the woman knelt to me the first confused gusts of the tide whirled crimson leaves about us. Presently the tide raced through the forest. It sang through bare autumn branches and half buried us in a drift of leaves. The woman's warm mouth whispered over my face. Then, far away I heard the mighty wave of wind bellow into the gorges of Guapanga, shrilling in the wild crags.

I lay dreaming. One day I would be Old Man. If I became a councillor next fall my way would be easy. This would be inevitable, because my grandfather and my father had built an empire and left it to me. With such an empire and my own good talent as a logician I could, as I lay there in the forest, decide that I wanted one day to be Old Man.

The woman lay still in my arms. Her eyes had been fixed on the depths of trees where Red Giant cast vermillion spears. Now they turned to me in a dream. I stroked her shoulder where coils of honey-colored hair buried my hand. The last gusts of the tide lifted lazy dervishes from the leaves about us and cooled the flame of her cheeks.

She said, "I have loved you since you came to me, like a god here in your forest."

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I saw in her gentle mind that this was so, and also that she had hardly realized her capacity to love.

Suddenly I remembered the name that Old Man had muttered as he died. His elite wives had been gathered at his bed. His dearest friends had been there. But the last name he had uttered had been that of a common woman, a concubine who was not even allowed in the house.

I marveled that he had taken this atelepathic woman to himself and outraged elite people even before he became Old Man. And I saw that what this might have lost him in political support from elite women had been more than offset by his later popularity among the chupas.

I focused again on the mind of this gentle, passionate woman beside me, and I found that her adoration was tempered by a strong determination of her own. The strength of her will astonished me until she said in her mind, "He has hair like yours. It is red like the flame of Red Giant."

Then this woman's mind opened to me. I was happy with understanding. I kissed her face till she wept, and she said haltingly, "He is like Red Giant in another way. He takes a storm with him everywhere."

And suddenly, of all my children, I loved best the wild little chupa.

V

It is wrong by the old standards, but I lay beside the woman throughout the afternoon of the convention. She neither stirred nor spoke with her mouth in all that time. My awareness left the forest and centered entirely in the convention.

I had returned barely in time. The voting had reached subjects critical to me. My turn for attention before the delegates came quickly.

I began my speech gravely.

"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, and delegates. I am going to return to my plea for dishonesty in government."

There was a massive, telepathed groan from the ranks of radical Mentalists and even some heavy sighs from conservatives. The radicals began hooting. It took the chair several seconds to quiet the disorder.

Afterward I spoke dramatically, directly to the chair. "Mr. Chairman, to protect this assembly against further outbursts of childishness, I am going to make an announcement. After I have made it, I think you may wish to grant a 15-second recess to allow the delegates to confirm the announcement.

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"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, and delegates. What I am going to ask as an integral part of our platform . . . what I am going to put into that platform concerning dishonesty in government . . . will in the terrible moment of "war" this afternoon . . . will in that crucial moment . . ."

I paused for a second while they sweated in anticipation of the moment that our logic would face the Matterist logic.

" . . . will in that decisive moment, receive a solid vote of 'yes' from every . . . chupa . . . on . . . this . . . planet."

It was a stunning moment. They were getting the thrill that had come to me when my half-brother had told me the news and it had crashed into my mind that chupas on the Matterist side could join chupas on our side to vote for us.

In one moment our politics had been revolutionized.

After the recess which the Chairman eagerly called, I did not have to ask if chupa friends of the delegates had confirmed me. The attention on me had deepened to the absolute. I had indeed rocked them, and for the first time they would hear me.

"Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, and delegates. It remains for me to state in a form suitable for our platform, the logic of our attitude toward dishonesty in government.

"Politicians who want your money want, at worst, the least part of you. Even then they usually take only a little of the least part. They take what will not cause much excitement, so that the source will remain fruitful. Such men are almost never dangerous.

"Give me the dishonest government. I know where they stand. We need only structure our laws so that their activities have the dignity of commercial defense. Then these clever foxes, while fleecing us lightly, will defend our freedom and our principles like lions. In such a strong government we need only on occasional politician who is a fanatic about 'honesty' to keep the rest in reasonable line."

I paused a few seconds and felt only profound attention focused on me. I had begun nicely, a logic that would fit our platform.

"No, it is among honest politicians that danger may lie! Show me the politician that has never gained money or made it possible for his friends to do so, or has never partaken of the other licenses that power provide, *and I will show you a fanatic.*

"The best that an honest poli-

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tician can be is a fanatic about honesty. But he can be much worse. It behooves you first to ask why he is honest. If he can answer that satisfactorily it behooves you to ask why he is in government.

"How much of your freedom does the honest politician want in exchange for not taking your money? Does he want your right to vote? Your right to your land? Your right to your women, your right to drink spirits, or eat meat, or read books?

"Such questions become critical when many honest men congregate in one government. Why have they foregathered in this ominous way? Why this unnatural climate of sobriety and thrift? What is it these honest men are seeking to change? The foxes have flown and your society is sick.

"Let the next Old Man reduce the penalties against governmental dishonesty and embezzlement — just as I proposed at the last convention. Let the next Old man make our political position attractive to clever and intelligent men who happen to be a little dishonest. Only in this way can we have a government strong enough to resist honest fanatics and *radical* encroachment."

I paused again, and I found a surprised approval falling toward me . . . a murmured phrase that was repeated over and over from all directions like a shower of autumn leaves. "Their money-economy. Their money-economy."

For the first time this assembly had caught a glimpse of my political pragmatism and the dimensions in which it could work for us. With the Matterists everything is organized . . . into management teams, labor unions and clubs. They have only black-and-white language for their supposed virtues such as "industry", "honesty" and "frugality". Yet there is less virtue in their higher circles than in my meanest tenant.

So now I shouted to the assembly. "Yes, their money-economy! The Matterists have an almost complete money-economy in which dishonesty and embezzlement are, at one and the same time, essentially prevalent and highly abhorred.

"But what of *our* semi-feudal economy? Need we be fearful of political dishonesty where power and position are the right of birth? Will not the chupas be pleased that we lower the penalties on dishonesty to give them greater opportunity to succeed in our world?

"So, if we have logical reasons, as I have given them, to accept dishonesty as a fundamental in

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our political platform, what will happen to the Matterists when we face them in the moment of "war"?

"In that moment when our minds are open to them, won't their logic be confounded? For they cannot deny the prevalence of dishonesty. And they cannot deny that the most dangerous politicians are honest fanatics from whom we are protected by strong, dishonest governments. Yet acceptance of these things implies destruction of their economy.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we will win the "war" and lose nothing in the peace!"

This conclusion was greeted with a storm of approval.

My father - in - law focused tightly on me. "You will not have to wait till next fall. You will be voted to the Council of Pragmatists later in the afternoon. Why don't you tactfully leave the convention now, at the height of your approval? You need not return until the voting starts."

VI

I lay in quiet triumph beside the woman, and she knew I had returned. She did not say anything, but she thought about me unashamedly, and I knew her thoughts.

She offered me a drink from the hasam gourd and I took it. Then I asked with my mind, "How far is it to your father's house."

In her mind there was not an answer to my question. Rather, her mind filled with the realization that I would buy her for a concubine.

So I had to repeat my question, and still there was in her mind only this realization.

Then I laughed and said loudly with my mouth, so that it startled her in the silent, afternoon forest, "How far is it to your father's house?"

Now I saw in her mind that the house would not be far beyond the creek. A place with a well in the yard and an arbor for wesah. The little chupa would be teasing the hopani fowl in cackling flurries around the house.

That was the way it was as we walked down from the forest except that the little chupa was not about. We crossed a field of freshly mown teree grass and walked up to the house. The woman straightened her hair self-consciously. I adjusted my tunic and my cap and found some leaves on my breeches. Red Giant hung in a cloudy blaze, waiting to start his plunge at the horizon.

The father and his workmen

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had finished in the fields for the day. They had just returned to the barns and the animals as the woman called him.

He came out, a tall weathered man, straight and kindly faced. Yet I saw the face harden with resentment when he recognized me. This was a proud man who would never have asked me to right a wrong.

Nevertheless, he bowed with respect.

I spoke the proper idiom with warmth, for I respected the father of such a woman. "I withdraw respectfully from the door to your mind."

Now, as was proper, he straightened from his bow. I saw that in the interim he had understood what this was about. He was happy for his daughter, and that the wrong would now be righted.

Now the ceremony would have to come at once. In small talk there might occur exchanges which are thought to be bad omens. So I declared, "Man, I would buy your daughter for a concubine."

The woman at once turned her back to us and lowering her head, sighed.

The father's eyes were suddenly misted. Ceremonially, he looked up at the sky. "Red Giant witnesses what a fraud has come here."

He went to the barn and called his three workmen out as witnesses to the "fraud". He had had no wife for many years and so these would be the only witnesses. The workmen stood with their caps in their hands. Two of them who were married were smiling over the young woman's fortune, but the unsmiling bachelor had had a secret hope of his own.

Doing my best to remember this ceremony, I took the traditional coin of small worth from my purse and grasped the father's hand and placed the coin in it. I repeated, "I would buy your daughter, man."

The father cast the coin on the ground. I was grateful that he used the ancient, simpler form of the ceremony. He stamped on the coin and said, "I count not your money but your honor. Thus I see that you will mistreat her."

"I will treat her with respect."

"And then you will bring her unhappiness."

"I will bring her love and tenderness."

"And finally, you will abandon her to wretchedness."

"I will keep her with me always."

The father turned to his witnesses and demanded, "You hear this fraud?"

And the workmen used the an-

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cient form, retorting in ragged unison, "No, we deem it honorable."

The father then asked me, "You swear by Theda to do these things?"

"I swear by Theda I will do all these things."

The ceremony was over, and the father and I clasped thumbs while the woman remained as she was with bowed head.

He said, "I will take these witnesses to the village tomorrow and sign papers. They will be delivered to you for signing, will they not?"

"I think so. I have never done this."

He smiled and it was kind of him to say, "Though you think not, White Dwarf will reappear." This common figure, referring to the regular eclipse and return of White Dwarf, meant it had been beyond human power that I was five years late in purchasing his daughter.

I drew him aside at this point and this perturbed him. "No, Excellency, do not make a suggestion. There is no need for a purchase."

"I know there is no need, but I honor you and I insist."

"Please, no. I would not feel right."

I knew that he spoke the truth. I smiled and forced him to grasp thumbs again. "But you can do nothing if I sign to you whatever land you now cultivate."

With him this made a purchase possible because he need not physically accept something. It was an extravagant price that would outrage elite people.

He saw that this measured my respect for his inability to accept the usual money. He shook his head and stared at the ground, unable to hide his smile of pride.

The woman, who should have been standing in ceremonial silence some distance behind us, suddenly ran past calling, "Oh, my son, drop the thing. Throw it away. Father, you were supposed to look after him. Oh, my son, drop the thing."

It was the little chupa. He strode from the brush grimed and sweaty, holding in his hand a thin, lavender-striped nolegs as long as a man's arm. The woman would not approach her son when she reached him because he gleefully waved the coiling nolegs at her.

Her father left me and took the nolegs from the child and let it glide away in the grass. Only then did she kneel and scold the chupa, while she brushed the dust from his tunic and the grime from his face and picked leaves and twigs from his red hair.

He stared over her shoulder at me. Even when she used the

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hem of her gown to wipe the dirt from his face, pushing his face this way and that, he kept his wide eyes on me. I could feel his mind searching, and I opened my mind to him.

The workman had laughed lightly about the nolegs. But when one of them saw the red-polled chupa being presented to me with my red hair falling from under my cap, he guffawed. The farmer ordered all three back to the barns.

I lifted the child so that he sat on my arm and his mind seemed to be coming from his eyes. Presently he put his hands on me and he loved me.

After a time the woman took him from me and he rested his head at her throat. She took her eyes from me and looked up at Red Giant. Then she said the simple thing that was true.

"If all were chupa there would be no need for this "war".

What she said was even truer than she meant it. For, as I glanced with her at the sky, I saw the pale glow of our sister planet, Lalone, where the Matterists invaded and enslaved the semi-rationals during the reign of the last Matterist Old Man. If all were chupa we would not have to fight over and over against the Matterist ambitions.

I turned to her father. "Have her pack only what she may need for tonight. I will send servants tomorrow for whatever she wishes."

He started to agree but an expression of intense concentration came over his face. I spun to the woman and found the same look on her face.

One of my lieutenants was instructing them to begin voting.

I took just a monent to scan all of Guapanga, found the people voting hard against the Matterists' "organized labor", and the monks voting their subtle denials of Matterism, and the chupas voting like crazy for dishonest government. It was a fine panorama for the dead-serious Matterists to have to face when they opened their minds to us.

I promptly returned my awareness to the convention. I learned in an incidental flash that I had won my place on the Council, and I found the delegates in a hasty vote for our candidate for Old Man.

My father-in-law won, as had been foregone, and only just in time. The Matterists were already probing for our collective awareness. It was the moment of "war".

This probing of foreign logic acts as a catalyst. All elite Mentalists, including now even the women of Guapanga, opened their minds to the logic of our

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platform. Collectively and intensely we believed our platform in all its logical beauty; an algebra of faith, cemented at every possible point to reality. Every Mentalist on the planet partook of one mind and one logic.

Only three times in my life have I been part of this almost unendurable moment of total, social awareness. It is like a moment of being a god.

Our logic neatly encompassed and projected, on my pragmatic basis, the massive, uniform vote of the common people and the telepathing of the chupas. We saw, even as the collective mind of the Matterists became discernable, how impossible it would be for their logic to digest or deny these comically true assertions about life with which we could live so easily.

Now the two collective minds were completely interpentrated Age-old confusions were stirred in us by the Matterist's foreign logic. But we were stirring more than confusion in them. In only a few minutes they were in defeat, their collective logic fragmented by our stronger logic. Abruptly, they were asking individually for the placing of Old Man to begin.

While we still held our collective mind in order that the placing of Old Man could get safely under way, it was fascinating to listen to snatches of conversation back and forth between individual Matterists. They were contacting friends and family members now that their collective mind had been broken, and they spoke not as a stationary god, the way we continued to speak, but as mystified people.

"What in the name of Paline was that business about dishonest government being the best government?"

Then a woman to her prominent husband, "I tell you, you have to do something. How horrible to be ruled by an Executive with three wives and a raft of messy concubines!"

Then one industrialist to another: "There they were again with all their people voting against work. If our workers get that way we're doomed."

A young schoolman cursed angrily. "How can they go on disbelieving in progress and beat us every time?"

And still we millions of Mentalists held our collective mind, our god-like awareness of each other and the total, victorious platform of belief and logic we had put together that day. While we held this collective mind, our new Old Man, my father-in-law, made his delicate, pragmatic way into the Matterists' shattered faiths.

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This process of becoming Old Man requires a consummate logician and the ardent assistance, throughout the truce, of his former enemies as well as his friends. Frequently, the first pretender to this position has had more ambition than talent for pragmatic logic and has gone out of his mind.

But my father-in-law would make it.

There was no doubt about the old lecher's ability. He would make a fine Old Man . . . and one who would not live too long for my ambitions.

VII

When at last we Mentalists were released from the collective mind by an order from the new Old Man, I found myself in the farmer's yard. Of course I had fallen to the ground during the great concentration.

The woman was kneeling near me without touching me. She explained, "Father has fed the boy and is putting him to bed."

Red Giant boiled on the crest of the black Guapangas and darkness streaked across the foothills. The larger moon, the electric blue Theda, Goddess of Love, had risen behind us.

So I said, "Our way home will be lighted by Theda and warmed by Red Giant."

My elite women consider me crude, and I saw that this woman and I would get along fine. For, in the common language, my remark had a double meaning and her quiet laugh had a hoydenish ring.

But we did not leave in time to be warmed by Red Giant. The father came out and announced, "You have had a victory."

I corroborated that and he added, "Then we have two things to drink to."

We went into the kitchen and he poured liberal glasses of cool wesah wine. We drank them slowly sitting before a wood fire and talking about how the father should have another wife. Then he poured us another glass, except for the woman who said she would have no more. So her father and I had two more.

After that I said, "No, thank you. I am sufficiently drunk to withstand a walk through the woods."

I carried the sleeping child and the woman carried her bundle. Sometimes we touched each other, but it was a little late for woodland love — especially since I was burdened with the past offense that slept on my shoulder.

When we reached the lodge we found servants out in the entrance with lanterns.

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My chupa half-brother stated, "Excellency, you have kept a closed mind and we have been worried about you."

"Thank you. I have been well."

He stared at the honey-haired woman. The thought that crossed his mind was immediately picked up inside the lodge, and I felt the minds of all three elite wives tense. Well, they would stay tense all night, I could tell them.

I was weary of my role as strong father. I said to my half-brother, "Here, please carry this dumpling."

To a servant I said, "And you please take the woman's bundle."

Now, my half-brother was staring at the child's red poll, and he laughed aloud with his mouth. At that there was a flurry of telepathic gabbling from within the lodge. They left the bathing of the children and the roasting of a flank of the charl boar, and the overseeing of the setting of the table for dining, and they were coming to meet us.

I put my arm about the woman's shoulder. We walked into the great lodge with its hundred rooms and many courts to meet my elite women. I felt her tremble and I pressed her shoulder to me reassuringly.

My eldest son came running pellmell and stopped before us. He stared in stunned silence at the honey-haired woman. She smiled at him and he smiled with widening eyes. Then he dashed forward and threw himself in my arms.

"Father, I'm so glad you're back."

I held the youth with one arm and stroked his dark head. "I'm glad to be back, son."

"Father, you know we have had big gray karks in the grain bins."

"Yes, they have been eating and spoiling too much grain."

"I killed three of them today with a club."

I looked him in the eye steadily. Then I removed my arm from the woman and took his head in my hands and kissed his cheek. "Thank you, son. That had to be done."

I pushed him away playfully. "Get along now. We have to meet your mother."

At the entrance to the central court my three elite wives stopped and stared at us. We stopped and the servants stopped.

With my mouth I announced to my elite wives, "I have brought home a concubine," and realized with embarrassment that I had made it sound like I had brought home some grand present for *them*.

Graciously, my chief wife said with her mouth, "Isn't she love-

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ly." And she extended her hands and came forward to greet the woman.

To me she telepathed, "I had rather you came home with a stick, My Husband."

My father was suddenly in my mind, irritable and resentful. "I want to see her. I want to see the honey-haired woman and her red-haired child. I want to see the big club you have brought home."

"Forgive me, father. Please! Tomorrow. This is so short a night."

His mouth chuckled. "Tomorrow, son. This has been a fine convention all around."

This day had made it clear to me that the old worlds of the elite were very nearly over. As a politician first and an arch-conservative later, I had reached a radical conclusion. This admirable child with the red poll was the future.

As Old Man, I would help that chupa's future along by changing a few marriage laws. In that future, all will be chupa. That will end the Matterist plans to colonize yellow suns.

I stroked the child's red head and knew his dreaming mind. He was fascinated with the booming flight of the rockets. As surely as he lay there he would build more engines and fly into space.

Very well. He can go to that distant yellow sun and tell those semi-rationals on Erth how they have been saved by the conservative party of Guapanga. When he is old enough, I will be Old Man, and I will arrange the trip. It will give those Erth people something to think about besides that mechanical telepathing by Ed Sulvan and Joni Karson. How that stuff can jam the galaxy.

I envy him, the little chupa. There on Erth, they have a *blue* jay. It is one thing to telepath from the mind of a semi-rational who is there. It would be quite another thing to see, with your own eyes, one of those blue jays flash in the trees of Erth like a splinter struck from that *blue* sky.—WYMAN GUIN

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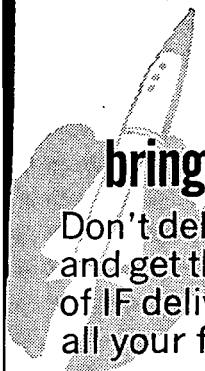

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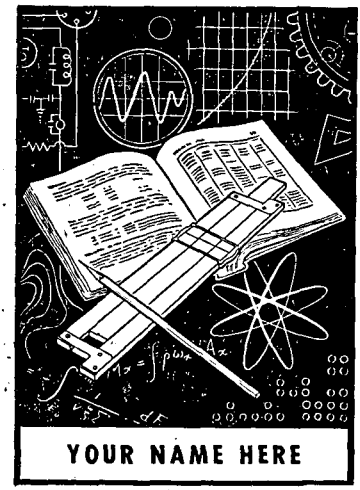

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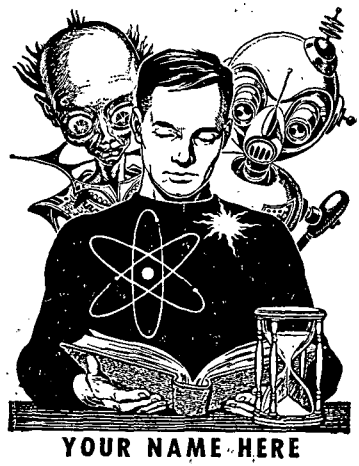

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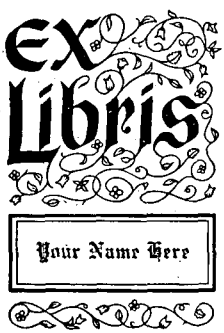

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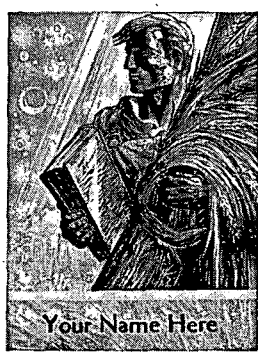

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